

Chilango cha Mulungu

Kuchokera ku *Arrow of God*, nkhani yolembedwa
ndi Chinua Achebe

Womasulira m'Chichewa: LULA PENSULO

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Umenewu unali usiku wachitatu kungochokera pamene anayamba kuyang'ana kumwamba kuti aone zizindikiro za mwezi watsopano. Iye ankadziwa kuti uoneka lero, koma monga mwa chizolowezi chake ankayamba kuuyang'ana kukadali masiku atatu. Pa moyo wake ankayendera mfundo yakuti munthu amafunika kutsimikizira zinthu zonse. M'nyengo ngati imeneyi ntchito yoona ngati mwezi waoneka sinkakhala yotulutsa thukuta kwenikweni. Iye sankafunika kuchita kuthyola khosi lake pofufuza mweziwo ngati mmene ankachitira ikakhala nyengo yadzinja. Pa nyengoyi, mweziwo unkabisala m'mitambo kwa masiku ambirimbiri moti akamauona unkakhala utakula n'kufika pomaoneka watheka. Mweziwu ukamachita zautambwali zakezi, Mkulu Wansembeyu ankangokhalira maso kumwamba n'kumaudikirira kuti uoneke.

Obi wake, m'mawu ena nyumba yake, anali wosiyana ndi ma *obi* amuna onse. Kutsogolo kwa *obiyo* kunali khomo lalikulu. Koma pambali pake chakumanja, panalinso kakhomo kena kakang'ono. Pakakhomo kameneka m'pamene Ezeulu ankakhala akamayang'ana kumwamba kuti aone ngati mwezi watuluka ndipo udzu womwe unali padenga la kakhomoka unadulilidwa bwinobwino moti pankangokhala ngati pakhomo lotulukira mwezi. Kunja kunali kutayamba kuvala mdima tsopano ndipo maso a Ezeulu anali ga kumwamba. Mwa apa ndi apo ankaphe-

thira pofuna kuchotsa misozi yomwe inkalengeza m' maso mwake.

Ezeulu sankafuna kuvomereza kuti maso ake akugonja moti sankaganiza kuti tsiku lina adzafika momafunika kufunsa munthu wina kuti amuuze zimene akuona ngati mmene agogo ake aamuna ankachitira maso awo atatheratu. Kunena zoon, agogo akewo anakhala ndi moyo wautali zedi moti kusaona anangokuzolowera ngati mmene munthu amachitira ndi chibangiri chomwe wakhalakuchivala kwa nthawi yaitali m'dzanja lake. Ngati Ezeulu akanakhala ndi moyo wautali choncho, m'kupita kwa nthawi nayenso akanavomereza kuti maso ake amugwiritsa mwala. Koma pa nthawiyi maso ake anali adakali akuthwa ngati a mnyamata, mwinanso kuposa pamenepo, chifukwa anyamata am'masiku amenewo sanalinso ngati amvula zakale. Ezeulu sankatopa kuwacheza anyamatawo akakumana nawo. Ankawapatsa moni mwamphamvu ngati akufuna kuwathothola nkono kenako n'kuwapana mwamphamvu ndi chikhatho chake chokhakhala ngati pamsana pang'ona ndipo anyamatawo ankadumphira chifukwa cha ululu kwinku akuthawitsa dzanja lawo ngati lachitamatuza.

Mwezi umene anaona tsiku limenelo unali wowonda ngati mwana wodyetsedwa moperewera ndi mayi wongomupeza. Iye anayang'anitsitsa mweziwo kuti aone ngati mbali ina sinaphimbike ndi mtambo. Pamene ankachita zimenezi, anatambasula dzanja lake mwamanthann'kutenga *ogene* wake. Mantha amenewa ankamugwira nthawi iliyonse yomwe mwezi watsopano watuluka. Ngakhale kuti tsopano anali munthu wachikulire, manthawo ankamukamatabe ngati wakuba. N'zoon kuti kungochokera pamene anakhala Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu, mantha amenewa ankagonjetsedwa akaganizira chimwemwe cho-

mwe ankapeza pokhala ndi udindo waukulu umenewu. Komabe, sikuti manthawo ankaferatu. Ankangokhala ngati akomoka kaye kufikira pa nthawi inanso yabwino.

Iye anamenya *ogene* wake uja kuti *ngo ngo ngo ngo* . . . ndipo posakhalitsa kulirako kunavomeredwa ndi mfuwu ya ana omwe ankanyadira kuonekera kwa mwezi watsopanowo.

Onwa atuo! . . . onwa atuo! . . . ankatero anawo polandira mweziwo.

Kenako Ezeulu anaika m'chimake ndodo yomwe ankamenyera *ogene* uja ndipo anakhala pansi motsamira khoma.

Ana a Ezeulu nawonso anali m'gulu la ana omwe ankanyadira kutuluka kwa mweziwo. Mawu akuthwa a Obiageli ankamveka kwambiri pagulu la anawo ngati mmene kumamvekera kulira kwa *ogene* pakati pa ng'oma komanso zitoliro. Mkulu Wansembeyo ankathanso kutola mawu a mwana wake wamng'ono, dzina lake Nwafo, kuchokera pagululo. Nawonso azimayi anaima pabwalo n'kumacheza akuyang'ana mweziwo mwachidwi.

"Mwezi," anatero mkazi wamkulu wa Ezeulu, dzina lake Matefi, "nkhope yako ikumane ndi yanga kuti ndikhale ndi mwayi."

"Kodi mweziwo uli kuti?" anafunsa Ugoye, mkazi wamng'ono wa Ezeulu. "Ine sindikuuona. Kapenatu ndachita khungu?"

"Inu simukuuona uwo uli pamwamba pa mtengo wa *ukwa*? Ayi osati pamenepo. Ingoyang'anani kumene chala changachi chaloza."

"Oho-o, ndauona tsopano. Mwezi, nkhope yako ikumane ndi yanga kuti ndikhale ndi mwayi. Komatu mwezi wakewu wakhala udyo! Kakhalidwe kake sikakundisangalatsa."

“Chifukwa chiyani?” anafunsa Matefi.

“Ndikuona kuti sunakhale bwino, wakhala ngati mwezi woipa.”

“Ayi,” anatero Matefi, “palibe munthu amene amakayikira akaona mwezi woipa. Mwachitsanzo, mwakumbukira mmene mwezi unkaonekera pa tsiku limene Okuata anamwalira? Mwezi wake unkaoneka ngati uli ndi miyendo ndipo miyendoyo inangoti kangalala m’mwamba!”

“Kodi mwezi umapha anthu?” anafunsa Obiageli atagwira mwamphamvu chovala cha mayi ake.

“Koma mwana uyu anakhala bwanji? Kodi ukufuna undivule?”

“Ndafunsa kuti kodi mwezi umapha anthu-u?”

“Inde, umapha atsikana ang’onoang’ono,” anayankhira Nwafo.

“Inetu sindikuyankhula ndi iwe Nachimphuno!”

“Choka iwe! Ndikuswatu ine, tachionani chikhosi kusololokera m’mwamba.”

Mwezi umapha anyamata ang’onoang’ono. Mwezi umapha ana amphuno zazikulu ngati chulu. Mwezi umapha anyamata ang’onoang’ono . . . Obiageli anayamba kumuimba m’bale wakeyo.

Ezeulu anadzuka n’kukalowa munkhokwe yake kuti akatenge chilazi chapadera. Zilazi zapaderazi ankaziika pathandala lansungwi ndipo kumayambiro kwa chaka chatsopano, zilazizo zinkakhalapo khumi ndi ziwiri. Koma tsopano pathandalapo panali patatsala zilazi zisanu ndi zitatu. Ezeulu ankadziwa ndithu kuti zikuyenera kukhalapo zisanu ndi zitatu, komabe anaziwerenga mosamala kwambiri kuti aone ngati zonse zinali pomwepo. Iye anali atadya kale zilazi zitatu ndipo chilazi chachinayi ndi chimene chinali m’manja mwakechi. Asanatuluke anaya-

ng'ananso zilazi zomwe zinatsala zija ndipo kenako anatseka mosamala kwambiri pakhomo la nkhokweyo. Atatero ananyamuka n'kukalowa mu *obi* wake.

Chipika chomwe anachisonkhezera pamoto womwe unali mu *obi* wakeyo chinali chikunyekabe. Iye anatenga nkhuni zingapo zomwe zinaunjikidwa pakona ina ya *obiyo* ndipo anaziika mosamala pamoto paja. Kenako anaiika chilazi chija pamwamba pa nkhunizo ngati mmene munthu amachitira akamapereka nsembe yopsereza. Pamene ankadikirira kuti chilazicho chipse, anayamba kuganizira zinthu zapadera zomwe zinkayenera kuchitika kuchokera pa tsikuli. Tsikuli linali la *Oye*. Tsiku lotsatira linali la *Afo* ndipo tsiku linalo linali *Nkwo*. Pa tsiku la *Nkwo* pankakhala chimsika cha mundiponderamwana. Pa tsikuli, pankachitikanso Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani. Monga tanenera kale, tsikuli linali lachitatu kuchokera pa tsiku la *Oye*. Pa tsiku la *Afo* wansembeyu ankafunika kutumiza amithenga oti akalengeze za tsiku la *Nkwo* m'midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro.

Ezeulu ankati akaganizira kuchuluka kwa mphamvu zake pankhani ya zokolola komanso pa anthu onse, ankadzifunsa ngati mphamvuzo zinalidi zenizeni. N'zoona kuti iyeyo ndi amene ankatchula tsiku la Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani komanso Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano, koma si iyeyo amene ankasankha tsikulo. Iye ankangokhala ngati mlonda basi. Mphamvu zake sizinali zosiyana ndi mphamvu zomwe mwana amakhala nazo akauzidwa kuti wapatsidwa mbuzi. Pa nthawi yonse yomwe mbuziyo ili moyo, imakhaladi yake. Amaipatsa zakudya komanso kuisamalira. Koma pa tsiku limene imaphedwa m'pamene mwini wake weniweni amadziwika. Ayi! Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu ndi woposa pamenepo, akuyenera kukhala woposa pamenepo. Ngati angakane

kutchula tsiku ndiye kuti sipangakhale chikondwerero. Ngati angachite zimenezi ndiye kuti anthu sangabzale komanso kukolola mbewu zawo. Koma kodi akanayerekeza kukana kuchita zimenezi? Palibe Mkulu Wansembe yemwe anachitapo zimenezi m'mbuyomo. Choncho Ezeulu sakanayerekeza dala kuchita chibwana chanchombo-lende ngati chimenechi.

Komabe nkhani imeneyi inkamuwawa kwambiri muntima moti zimene ankachita akakumana ndi adani ake zinkangokhala ngati wamva kale kuti akuderera mphamvu zake.

“Musayerekeze kunena zimenezo,” ankatero Ezeulu kwa adani akewo, “musayerekeze m'pang'ono pomwe kutsegula pakamwa panu powolapo. Palibe munthu mu Umuaro muno yemwe angalimbane ndi ine. Mkazi amene angabereke munthu amene angachite zimenezi sanabawe.”

Komabe akawadzudzula chonchi adani akewa, ankangomvako bwino kwa kanthawi kochepe. Posakhali-tsa ankayambiranso kuganizira za kuchuluka kwa mphamvu zomwe anali nazo. Kodi mphamvu zake zinali zotani ngati aliyense ankadziwa kuti sangazigwiritse ntchito? Kunali bwino kungonena kuti mphamvuzo palibe mofanana ndi mphamvu zomwe galu wina wodzikuza ankaganiza kuti ali nazo. Iye ankaganiza kuti akhoza kuyatsa moto ndi timatudzi take totentha . . . Maganizo amenewa ali m'mutu, Ezeulu anatola katsatsa n'kutembenuza chilazi chija.

Pa nthawiyi, mwana wake womaliza, Nwafo, analowa mu *obimo* ndipo anapereka ulemu kwa bambo akewo powatchula dzina lawo. Kenako anakhala kumapeto kwa kama wozira yemwe anali chakufupi ndi kakhomo kakan'g'ono kaja. Ngakhale anali wamng'ono, zinkaonekeratu

kuti mulungu anamusankha kuti adzakhale Mkulu Wansembe m'tsogolo. Zimamvekea kuti ngakhale asanaphunzire kuyankhula anakonda kwambiri kuchita miyambo yolemekeza mulungu wawo Ulu. Zikuonekanso kuti ankadziwa zambiri zokhudza miyamboyi kuposa azibambo ena a ndevu zawo. Komabe ngakhale mwanayu ankasonyeza zizindikiro zimenezi, palibe amene akanapupuluma kunea kuti Ulu wamusankha kuti adzakhale Mkulu Wansembe. Nthawi ikadzafika pomwe Ezeulu adzalekane nalo dziko lapansi, Ulu ankayenera kudzasankha m'modzi mwa ana a wansembeyu, mwinanso yemwe anthu sankamuganizira n'komwe. Zimenezi zinali zoti zinachitikaponso m'mbuyomo.

Ezeulu ankangotokosatokosa pamoto paja n'kumatembenusa chilazicho kuti chisapserere. Mwana wake wina wamwamuna yemwe anali wamkulu pa onse, dzina lake Edogo, anatuluka m'khumbi lake ndipo pamene ankadutsa pa *obi* wa bambo akewo anapereka ulemu po-watchula dzina lawo kuti "Ezeulu!"

"E-e-e!" anayankha motero Ezeulu.

Edogo anadutsa *obi* wa bambo akeyo n'kumalowera kumene kunali khumbi lomwe mchemweli wake, Akueke, ankakhalamo mongoyembekezera.

"Tapita ukamuitane Edogo," anatero Ezeulu kwa Nwafo.

Anyamata awiriwa anabwerera limodzi ndipo onse anakhala pakama wozira yemwe anali mu *obiyo*.

Ezeulu anatembenuzanso chilazi chija asanayambe kuyankhula.

"Kodi ndinayamba ndakuuzapo chilichonse chokhudza kusema milungu?"

Edogo sanayankhe chilichonse. Ezeulu anayang'ana kumene Edogo anakhala koma sankamuona bwino-

bwino chifukwa kunali mdima. Koma Edogo ankaona nkhope ya bambo akewo yomwe inkawala ndi moto ume-ne ankawotchera chilazi chopatulika chija.

“Kodi Edogo alimo m’nyumba muno?”

“Inde, ndilipo bambo.”

“Ndafunsa kuti, ndinakuuza chiyani zokhudza kusema milungu? Ndabwerezanso chifukwa mwina sunamve funso langa. N’kutheka kuti sunandimve chifukwa ndimayankhula madzi atadzaza mkamwa.”

“Munandiuza kuti ndisadzase menso.”

“Ndinakuuza zimenezo, si choncho? Nanga mphekesera zomwe ndikumvazi zoti ukusema *alusi* wa munthu wina wa ku Umuagu zikuchokera kuti?”

“Ndi ndani wakuuzani zimenezo?”

“Ndi ndani wandiuza zimenezo? Ndikungofuna undiyankhe kuti ndi zoonza kapena zabodza, osati uzindifunsanso za amene wandiuza nkhanayi.”

“Ndikufuna ndidziwe amene wakuuzaniyo chifukwa ndikuganiza kuti munthu ameneyo sadziwa kusiyana kwa mulungu ndi chigoba cha chinyawu.”

“Chabwino, ungathe kumapita. Ngati ukufuna ukhoza kusemanso milungu yonse ya ku Umuaro kuno. Ukadzandimvanso ndikukufunsa za nkhanu imeneyi udzatenge dzina langa n’kulipereka kwa galu.”

“Chimene ndikusemera munthu wa ku Umuagu ndi chigoba cha chinyawu, osati mulungu.”

Edogo anayesetsa kufotokoza mbali yake, koma palibe chimene anaphulapo. Iye anangoisiya kaye nkhanayo kuti akambirane nawonso bambo akewo mtima wawo ukatsika. Kenako mchemwali wake Obiageli analowa n’kupereka ulemu kwa Ezeulu ndipo anapita kukakhala pakama wadothi uja.

“Kodi wamaliza kuphika masamba aja?” anafunsa

Nwafo.

“N’chifukwa chiyani umangokhalira kufunsa zakumphika? Kodi sumadziwa kaphikidwe ka masamba? Kudya basi!”

“Takhalani chete mukundilowa m’makutu inu!” anatero Ezeulu akuchotsa chilazi ankawotcha chija pamoto pogwiritsa ntchito kamtengo kaja ndipo kenako anachitola n’kuchiika m’manja akuoneka kuti wakhutira ndi mmene chapsera. Atatero anaimirira n’kusolola mpeni wakuthwa konsekonse kudenga ndipo anayamba kusenda chilazicho mofatsirira. Pamene ankamaliza, m’manja mwake munali mutaderatu ndi mitsizi. Kenako anaika chilazicho m’mbale yomwe inali chapafupi ndipo anakuntha manja ake powawombanitsa maulendo angapo. Atamaliza, anatematema chilazicho n’kuchisiya kaye kuti chizizire.

Pamene Ezeulu ankayamba kudya, Obiageli anayamba kuimba kanyimbo chapansipansi. Iye ankadziwa kuti bambo akewo sangayerekeze kugawira munthu wina chilazi chomwe ankachidya popanda mafuta a gwalangwa mwezi watsopano ukaonekera. Koma sanasiye kuyembekezera kuti mwina tsiku lina adzamugaira. Ezeulu sanayankhule chilichonse pamene ankadya chilazicho. Iye anali atakhala chapatali ndi moto uja, atatsamira khoma n’kumayang’ana panja. Monga zinkakhalira nthawi zonse, maganizo ake ankaoneka kuti ali patali. Ankati akadyaidya, ankatenga chikho cha madzi ozizira n’kukonkha kukhosi. Amene anamubweretsera madziwa anali Nwafo. Pamene ankadya chibanthu chomaliza cha chilazi chija, Obiageli anatuluka n’kupita kukhumbi la mayi ake.

Nwafo anatenga mbale yomwe munali chilazi chija komanso chikho chamadzi chija n’kuziika malo abwino ndipo kenako anatenga mpeni womwe ankasendera chilazi

uja n'kuusomekanso kudenga la *obiyo*.

Ezeulu anadzuka pachikopa n'kuyang'ana kumene kunali kachisi wake yemwe anali pafupi ndi chipata chollowera kumpanda wapakhomopa. Iye anayang'ana *Ikenga* wake. Ichi chinali chiboliboli chachitali ngati mkono wa munthu wamkulu ndipo chinali ndi nyanga ziwiri. *Ikengayo* anali wokongoletsedwa ndi *okposi* wa mizimu yamakolo ndipo anali atathimbirira ndi magazi a nsembe. Mukachisiyo munalinso ndodo yaifupi ya *ofo*. Nayenso Nwafu anali ndi *okposi* wake wapadera. *Okposiyu* anamusemera chifukwa m'mbuyomo ankachita chifufu kukangoda usiku. Iye anauzidwa kuti azimutchula *okposiyo* kuti Nemesake ndipo ankaterodi. M'kupita kwa nthawi, matendawa anasiya kumuvutisa.

Ezeulu anatenga ndodo ya *afo* m'kachisi muja n'kukhala patsogolo pa kachisiyo. Iye sanakhale ngati munthu wamwamuna. Anatambalala ngati mzimayi moyang'ana mbali ina ya kachisiyo atagwira ndodo yaifupi ija ndi dzanja lake lamanja. Mbali ina ya ndodoyo ankaibaitsa pansu ngati njira yotsindikira mfundo zam'pemphero lake.

"Ulu, ndikukuthokozani chifukwa chondilola kuonanso mwezi watsopano. Chonde ndiloleni kuti ndipitirizebe kuona mwezi umenewu kambirimbiri. Dalitsani banja langa ndi moyo wathanzi komanso wachipambano. Popeza mwezi watsopanowu ndi chizindikiro choti anthu aponya mbewu zawo m'nthaka, lolani kuti midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi ibzale ndi kukolola mbewu zodzaza nkho-kwe. Tetezani anthu anu kuti asakumane ndi tsoka kumunda—monga kulumidwa ndi njoka kapena apheterere omwe angoti mbwe-e m'thengomu. Chonde titetezeni kuti tisadzikhape zipalapasilo ndi zikwanje kapena makasu. Dalitsani azimayi athu kuti azibereka ana aamuna okha-okha. Tikufuna kuti tidzapeze chiwerengero chocholuka

pa ulendo wotsatira tikamadzawerenga anthu am'midzi yathuyi kuti tidzakupatseni nsembe ya ng'ombe osati nkhuku ngati mmene timachitira chaka chatha pa Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano. Chonde lolani kuti ana aziika makolo awo m'nthaka, osati makolo kuika ana awo. Lolaninso kuti nkhope ya mwamuna kapena mkazi aliye-nse ione zabwino. Tikukupemphani kuti mukhuthulire madalitso ochuluka anthu anu onse m'chigawo chino."

Kenako anadzuka n'kukabwezera ofo uja m'kachisi. Anaika ofoyo pakati pa ikenga komanso okposi ndipo anapukuta pakamwa pake ndi kuseri kwa dzanja n'kunyamuka kukalowa mu obi wake. Nthawi iliyonse yomwe ankapempherera Umuaro, mkwiyo unkaonekera pankhope yake. Umenewu unali mkwiyo woyaka moto womwe unkabwera chifukwa cha kusagwirizana kwa midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro, zomwe adani ake ankati zinkachitika chifukwa cha iyeyo. Anthuwa ankamuda chifukwa ananena zoonapamaso pa mzungu. Koma kodi zikanatheka bwanji kuti munthu amene amanyamula ndodo yopatulika ya Ulu anene bodza akudziwa chilungamo chake? Mzunguyo, yemwe dzina lake linali Wintabota, anamvetsa zimenezi ngakhale anachokera kudziko lakutali lomwe palibe ankalandiziwa. Iye anaitana Ezeulu kuti akanene zoonazenizeni. Zimenezi ndi zimene zinapsetsa mtima adani ake chifukwa choti mzungu wochokera kosadziwikayo anabwera anawauza chilungamo chomwe ankachidziwa koma sankafuna kuchimva. Chinsinsi chimenechi chinali chokhudza mavuto oopsa omwe ankabwera kutsogolo.

Mawu a azimayi ochokera kumadzi ndi amene anadula maganizo a Ezeulu. Iye sankatha kuwaona bwino bwinobwino chifukwa cha mdima womwe unali madzulowo. Mwezi watsopano uja unali utabisalanso m'mitambo. Koma usikuwu zinkaoneka kuti uonekanso chifukwa mdima wake

sunali wandiweyani ngati mmene zinaliri mweziwo usana-oneke. Ukayang'ana kumwamba, mitambo inkangokhala ngati nkhalango ndipo mweziwu unali ngati kamtengo komwe kadulidwa ndi nkhwangwa yakhwinthi kasana-khwime. Azimayi aja anayamba kumulonjera ponena kuti “Ezeulu!” ndipo m'modzim'modzi ankati akatchula dzinali, Ezeulu ankamuyankha mosisitika mpaka onse anadutsa. Azimayiwo anayenda mondondoza n'kudutsa *obi* wa Ezeulu kudzera chakumanja n'kukatulukira kuseri kumene kunali chipata china chomwe chinali pakati pa zipupa zazitali zozilidwa modongolera ndi dothi la katondo.

“Kodi azimayiwa si aja ndinawaona akupita kumadzi dzuwa likadawala?”

“Inde,” anayankha Nwafo, “Anapita kukatunga madzi ku Nwangene.”

“Owo-o!” Ezeulu anali ataiwala kuti anthu anali atasiya kutunga madzi mumtsinje wapafupi wa Ota chifu-kwa mwa dzulo lake wa ula wina anali atanena kuti chimwala chachikulu chobulungira, chomwe chinali pakati pa miyala ya kumene mtsinjewo unachokera, chigwa ndipo chikufuna munthu woti chidzatsamiritsepo mutu wake ngati pilo. Wa ulayo anati anthu angadzayambenso kutunga madzi mumtsinjewo pokhapokha akadzakhazika pansi mtima wa mulungu *alusi* yemwe anali mwini mtsinjewo, yemwenso anatchula dzina la mtsinjewu. Komabe, Ezeulu anamanga mfundo yakuti atsukuluzabe mkazi wake ngati angayerekeze kubweretsa chakudya mochedwa madzulowo. Iye ankaona kuti ngati mkaziyo amadziwa kuti akufunika kupita ku Nwangene kukatunga madzi, ndiye kuti akanapitako nthawi yabwino kuti abwereko mwachangu n'kuyamba kutakataka zakumphika. Ezeulu ankadana ndi zoti azilandira chakudya chake pa nthawi yoti azibambo onse am'mudzimo adya kenako n'kuiwala

zoti anapatsidwa chakudya.

Posakhalitsa mawu akuthwa a Obika anachekeka mdima womwe unali usikuwo pamene ankabwera kunyumbaku. Iye ankati akamayenda ankaimba nyimbo komanso muluzi ndipo muluziwo unkamveka ndi phokoso lalikulu kuposa mawu a azibambo ambiri m'mudziwu.

“Obika akubwera,” anatero Nwafo.

“Zatheka bwanji kuti kadzidziyu abwere mofulumira lero?” anatero Ezeulu ndipo ananena zimenezi panthawi yofanana ndi imene Nwafo ankayankhula.

“Tsiku lina adzakumananso ndi Eru,” anatero Nwafo akunena za chimzimu chomwe Obika anakumana nacho usiku. Nkhaniyi inadya moto pakhomo pa Ezeulu moti Nwafo akamaimva ankangokhala ngati analipo pamene zinkachitika.

“Ulendo wina adzakumana ndi Idemili kapena Ogwugwu,” anatero Ezeulu akumwetulira.

Pafupifupi zaka zitatu zapitazo, Obika anabwera chothamanga n'kudzalowa mu *obi* wa bambo ake ndipo anangofikira kudziponya m'manja mwawo akunjenjemera koopsa. Usikuwo kunali mdima wokhuthala chifukwa cha mitambo yamvula. Ziphaliwali zinkalira moswa makutu ndipo nazonso mphenzi sizinkati zawomba pati.

“Bwanji mwana wanga?” Ezeulu anamufunsa Obika mobwerezabwereza, koma Obika ankangonjenjemera pakamwa patanyivukiratu ndi mantha.

“Bwanji mwana wanga?” anafunsa mayi ake, Matefi, omwe analowa mu *obi* akunjenjemera kuposa mwana wawoyo.

“Aliyense akhale chete,” anatero Ezeulu mokalipa, “Unaona chiyani Obika?”

Mtima wake utakhala pansu, Obika anayamba kufo-tokoza zomwe anaona kutachita ching'aning'ani pafupi

ndi mtengo wa *ugili* womwe unali pakati pa mudzi wawo wa Umuachala ndi mudzi wa Umunneora. Obika atango-tchula malo amene anaona chinthu choopsacho, Ezeulu anazindikira chimene anaona.

“Ndinaona chilombo moti mutu wanga unafufuma ndi mantha.”

“Chilombocho chinalowera kuti? Chinalowa m’tchire lomwe lili chakumanzere lija?”

Zimene bambo akewa ananena zinamulimbitsa mti-ma Obika. Iye anagwedezera mutu ndipo Ezeulu anagwe-dezeranso mutu wake kawiri. Pa nthawiyi azimayi ena anali ataima pakhomu pa *obiyo*.

“Chimaoneka bwanji?”

“Chinali chachitali kuposa munthu aliyense.” Kenako anamezera mate, “Khungu lake linali lowala . . . ngati . . . ngati . . .”

“Chinavala ngati munthu wosauka kapena wolemera?”

“Chinavala ngati munthu wolemera. Komanso chinali ndi nthenga ya chiwombankhanga pachisoti chake.” Atangonena zimenezi anayambanso kunjenjemera moti mano ake anayamba kuchita phokoso mkamwa mwake.

“Ndiye n’chifukwa chiyani ukunjenjemera choncho? Uzichita zinthu ngati mwamuna iwe! Chilombocho chinali ndi nyanga ya njovu?”

“Inde. Chinanyamula nyanga yaikulu ya njovu paphewa pake.”

Mvula ija inali itayamba kupwatamuka tsopano. Mvula yake inali ya zimadontho zikuluzikulu moti pamene inkayamba zinkangokhala ngati miyala ikuvumba kuchokera kumwamba n’kumagwera m’madenga a nyumba.

“Palibe chifukwa choti uchitire mantha. Chilombo

waonacho ndi Eru, Mulungu yemwe amapereka chuma kwa munthu yemwe wakondwera naye. Anthu ena amamuona pamalo amenewo m'nyengo yadzinja ngati ino. N'kutheka kuti amachokera kokacheza kwa Idemili kape-na milungu ina ndipo amabwerera kwawo. Eru amalanga anthu okhawo omwe amalumbira mwachinyengo kuka-chisi wake.” Ezeulu anali atatengeka ndi kutamanda mulungu wopereka chumayu. Mmene anayankhulira, wina akanaganiza kuti Ezeulu ndi wansembe wa Eru osati Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu, yemwe anali mulungu wamkulu kuposa Eru komanso milungu ina yonse. “Eru akakonda munthu, chuma chimakhuthuka ngati mvula pakhomo pake. Zilazi zake zimakula ngati mapiri. Mbuzi zake zibereka ana atatuatatu komanso nkuku zake zimaswa ana ngati zitosi.”

Mwana wamkazi wa Matefi, dzina lake Ojiugo, anabweretsa mbale ya *foofoo* komanso ndiwo zake. Iye analonjera bambo ake n'kuika mbale zija pansi. Kenako anatembenukira kwa Nwafo n'kunena kuti: “Akuti upite kukhumbi la mayi ako amaliza kuphika.”

“Tamusiyeni mwanayu,” anatero Ezeulu yemwe ankadziwa kuti Matefi ankachita nsanje chifukwa choti Ezeulu anakonda kwambiri mwana wa mkazi mnzakeyu. “Tapita ukaitane mayi ako abwere kuno.” Ezeulu sanasunthe pomwe anakhala ndipo posakhalitsa anayamba kudya. Ojiugo atangomva zimene bambo akewo ananena anadziwa kuti kwaipa. Kenako ananyamuka n'kupita kukaitana mayi ake aja.

“Sindikukumbukira kuti ndakhala ndikung'amba kukamwa kwa nthawi yaitali bwanji, kuyesetsa kunena kuti sindifuna kumadya chakudya chamadzulo azibambo onse a mu Umuaro atapita kukagona,” Ezeulu ananena zimenezi Matefi atangolowa mu *obiyo*. “Koma zimaoneka

kuti siumva. Kwa inuyo zimangokhala ngati zonena zanga ndi zosathandiza ngati tubzi totentha ta galu yemwe ankaganiza kuti akhoza kutigwiritsa ntchito poyatsira moto . . .”

“Komatu ndinapita komwe-e ku Nwangene kukatunga madzi . . .”

“Ngati ukufuna ukhoza kumapita ku Nkisa. Chime-ne ndikutanthauza n’choti ngati ukufuna kuti misala yomwe uli nayoyo ithe, udzayerenzezo kubweretsa chakudya changa nthawi ngati zino . . .”

Pamene Ojiugo ankabwera kudzachotsa mbale, anapeza Nwafo akukombezero nsuzi m’mbale yandiwo. Ojiugo anali atakwiya kwambiri pamene ankamuyembekezera Nwafo kuti amalizitse kutsukuluza mbaleyo ndi chala chake chamkombaphala. Atabwerera kwa mayi ake anawafotokozera zonse zimene Nwafo anachita. Sikuti Nwafo anachita zimenezi kamodzi kapena kawiri kokha. Zoona zake ndi zakuti ankachita zimenezi tsiku ndi tsiku.

“Kodi timaimba mlandu khwangwala akamatola nyama yowola?” anatero Matefi. “Iwe ukuganiza kuti mnyamata angatani ngati mayi ake amangokhalira kuphika kabaifa m’malo mophika nsomba? Mayi a Nwafotu amasunga ndalama zawo kuti akagulire zibangiri. Koma zimaoneka kuti Ezeulu saona kuti pali vuto lililonse. Koma ine ndikachita zomwezo si kundilalatira kwakeko!”

Ojiugo anali akuyang’ana kumene kunali khumbi la Ugoye lomwe linali patali chakumapeto kwenikweni pafupi ndi mpanda. Iye ankagoona kuwala kwachikasu kwa chikoloboyi panso pa chitseko cha khumbilo. Chapakati kumpandako panalinso khumbi lina ndipo makhumbiwa anamangidwa mokhala ngati mwezi watheka. Moyang’anizana ndi nyumba zitanu zomwe zinamangidwa ngati mwezi wathekazo, panali *obi* wa Ezeulu. Khumbi lachi-

tatuli linali la mkazi woyamba wa Ezeulu, dzina lake Okuata, yemwe anamwalira zaka zambiri zapitazo. Ojiugo sankadziwa zambiri zokhudza Okuata. Ankangokumbukira kuti anali mlerakhungwa komanso munthu wowolowamannya zedi. Okuata ankadziwa kuwawa kobereka moti sankagoneka mwana wamnzake kumimba kuli pululu. Iye ankagawira mwana aliyense amene wapita kukhumbi lake kalikonse kamene ali nako. Ankachita zimenezi kaya waphika kabaifa kapena nsomba. Sankachita zofanana ndi azimayi ena omwe amafika podzitsekera m'nyumba limodzi ndi ana awo akakhala kuti aphika ndiwo zankhuli. Okuata anali mayi a Adeze, Edogo komanso Akueke. Ndiyeno Okuata atatsamira nkono n'kusamukira kumbiyazodowoka, ana ake onse ankakhalabe m'khumbimo mpaka pamenatsikana onse anapeza mabanja. Kenako Edogo anapitirizabe kukhala m'khumbimo kufikira pamene anakwatira zaka ziwiri zapitazo n'kumanga nyumba yake kuseri kwa *obi* wa bambo ake. Tsopano Akueke anakalowanso m'khumbi muja atabwerako kubanja. Anabwerako akuda ndaula kuti mwamuna wake ankamuchitira nkhanza. Koma mayi a Ojiugo ankanena kuti limenelo linali bodza lankunkhuniza. Ankati banja likumukanika chifukwa ndi wosamva za ena komanso wonyada. "Mtsikana akakwa tiwa amafunika kuiwala za kukula kwa *obi* wa bambo ake," iye ankatero nthawi zonse, "Mkazi yemwe mutu wake umakoka samatenga *obi* wa bambo ake n'kupita naye kubanja."

Pamene Ojiugo ndi mayi ake ankati aziyamba kudya chakudya chawo, Obika anatulukira muluzi uli pakamwa.

"Tandipatsira mbale yake," anatero Matefi. "Koma lero ndiye wabwera mofulumiratu!"

Polowa m'khumbimo, Obika anawerama kuti asa-

gunde denga lapakhonde ndipo kenako analowa motso-goza manja. Atangolowa analonjera mayi ake. Mayi ake-wo anamuyankha kuti, “*Nno*” akuoneka kuti sakumusamala kwenikweni. Iye anakhala mongodziponya ngati ntolo wankhuni pabedi lozira lomwe linali m’nyumbamo. Ojiugo anapatsira mayi ake mbale ndipo kenako anapita kukatenga mbale ya *foofoo* pathandala lansungwi. Matefi anapemerera mbale anapatsidwa ija kuti achotse fumbi komanso phulusa lomwe linatsakamira m’menemo n’kupakuliramo ndiwo. Ojiugo analandira mbaleyo n’kukayi-ika pamene panali Obika ndipo kenako anatuluka panja kukatunga madzi.

Atangodya nthongo imodzi, Obika anatembenenza mbaleyo moilozetsera kumene kunali koloboyi kwinaku akuyang’anamo mosamala ngati waona kanthu kena kaku-yendayendamo.

“Kodi dzina la chakudyachi ndi chiyani? Zikungo-khala ngati matopetu!”

Mayi ake komanso mchemwali wake uja sanamusamale ndipo anangopitiriza kudya chakudya chawo. Zinkaneke kuti Obika anali atalawa uchema ndipo mowawo unkamulamulira.

Obika anali mnyamata wooneka bwino kwambiri mu Umuaro yense komanso midzi ina yozungulira. Nkhope yake inali yowumbika bwino komanso mphuno yake inali yoima bwino ngati chitoliro. Khungu lake linali looneka mwakatondo ngati la atate ake. Anthu akamuona ankanena kuti (ankanena zimenezi akakakumana ndi munthu aliyense wooneka bwino kwambiri) sanali mwana wa munthu wokhala pakati pa anthu a mtundu wa Igbo, omwe anathimbirira chifukwa chokhala m’tchire ndipo ndi akuda ngati makala. Iwo ankati iye ayenera kuti m’moyo wake wapita ankakhala kudziko lina lakutali kwambiri,

komwe kunkakhala anthu enaake omwe anthu a mtundu wa Igbo ankangowatchula kuti Olu.

Koma pali zinthu ziwiri zimene zinamuwononga Obika. Iye ankamwa uchema mowonjeza kwambiri komanso anali ndi mtima wapachala. Zikakhala kuti wapsa mti-ma, pakhomo ponse pankawawasa. Kuwonjezera apo, Obika anali mnyamata wadzitho moti akamenya munthu, munthuyo ankaoneka ngati chimwala chamugwera. Chifukwa cha zimenezi Ezeulu anakondwera kwambiri ndi Edogo chifukwa sankamuputira mavuto. Edogo anali m'bale wa Obika, koma wabere lina, ndipo anali wofatsa kwambiri. Ezeulu anakonda kuuza Obika kuti: “Si kula-kwa kukhala wanzeru komanso wopanda mantha. Koma osaiwala kuti khwangwala wamantha ndi amene amafa ndi ukalamba. Nthawi zinatuu anthu amaima pakhomo la munthu wamantha n’kumalozerana pabwinja lomwe munthu wochenjera ankakhalapo asanamwalire. Munthu amene samafuna kugonjera aliyense, amagonjera bokosi la maliro pamapeto pake.”

Komabe, nthawi zina Ezeulu ankaona kuti ndi bwino kukhala ndi mwana wochangamuka yemwe ankaphwanyanya zinthu chifukwa cha kupuphuluma kwake, kusiyanandi kukhala ndi mwana wodontha yemwe nthawi zonse ankangochita zinthu mozizira ndiponso mochedwa ngati nkho.

Si kale kwambiri pamene Obika ankafuna kupha munthu. Mchemwali wake wabere lina, Akueke, ankakonda kuthawa kubanja n’kumadandaula kuti mwamuna wake akungokhalira kumuwumbudza. Tsiku lina anabweranso kunyumba nkho yake itatupa. Obika sanadikire kuti amve nkho yonse. Atangoona zimenezo ananyamuka n’kupita ku Umuogwugwu komwe mlamu wakeyo ankakhala. Pamene ankapita kumudziwu anadutsira kwa mnza-

ke wina wapabondo, dzina lake Ofoedu. Ofoedu anali munthu wopulupudza kwambiri ndipo sankasowa pamalo omwe pakuchitika ndewu. Pamene ankakafika ku Umuogwugwu, Obika anauza Ofoedu kuti wamutenga n'cholinga choti akamuthandize akamakamulongosola mlamu wakeyo.

“Ndiye n'chifukwa chiyani wanditenga ineyo?” anafunsa Ofoedu mokhumudwa. “Kapena ukungofuna kuti ndikakunyamulire chikwama chako ukamakagwira ntchitoyo?”

“Usadandaule, ntchito yako ikapezeka. Ngati anthu a ku Umuogwugwu alidi amene ndikuwadziwa inewo, onse akabwera kudzateteza m'bale wawo.”

Palibe aliyense amene ankadziwa kumene Obika wapita kufikira pamene ankabwerako chakumasana ali limodzi ndi Ofoedu. Anthu awiriwa anabwera atasenza mwamuna wa Akueke pachithatha. Maso a mwamuna wa Akueke anali ali pamtunda ndipo ankachita kuonekeratu kuti wangotsala pang'ono kumalizika. Iwo anamutula pansi pa mtengo wa *ukwa* ndipo anaopseza aliyense kuti amene angayerekeze kumugwira amuswa mutu. Azimayi ake komanso anthu ena a nyumba zoyandikira anayesa kumuchonderera kuti amuchotse mlamu wakeyo pansi pamtengopo, koma iye sanamvere. Iwo ankamulozera chipatso chakupsa chomwe chinali mumtengowo. Chipatsocho chinali chachikulu ngati dzaye moti chikanangomugwera akanamalizika.

“Inde, ndamusiya dala pamenepopo. Ndikufuna chipatsocho chimuphwanye—apo ayi adyedwe ndi afisi.”

Kenako Ezeulu anatulukira akuyenda chothamanga atamva chipwirikiticho. Atangoona mwamuna wa Akueke, Ezeulu anauza Obika modandaula kuti abweretsa tsoka panyumba yake ndipo anamulamula kuti amasule mlamu

wakeyo.

Kwa misika itatu, Ibe sanadzuke pamphasa. Kenako tsiku lina abale ake anatulukira kunyumba kwa Ezeulu kuti adzamang'ale za nkhaniyo. Ambiri mwa anthuwa anali atasiyiratu kupita kumunda kungochokera pamene m'bale wawoyo anamenyedwa modetsa nkhwawa. Kwa misika itatu yathunthu, mwinanso kuposa pamenepo, iwo anadikirira uthenga wochokera kwa Ezeulu wofotokoza chifukwa chake Obika anamenya m'bale wawo n'kumusenza kupita naye kwawo.

“Kodi ndi nkhani yotani yomwe tikumvayi yokhudziza Ibe?” anafunsa motero abale ake aja. Ezeulu anayesetsa kuwakhazika mitima pansi popanda kuvomereza kuti mwana wakeyo wachita chinthu chachikulu cholakwika. Iye anaitana mwana wake wamkazi uja, Akueke, ndipo atabwera anaima pamaso pake.

“Mukanakhala kuti munamuona mwana wangayu patsiku limene ankabwera kuno, simukanafunsa zimenezozo. Kodi mmenemu ndi mmene mumachitira ndi atsikana amene mwawakwatira m'mudzi wakwanuwo? Ngati Khalidwe lanu ndi limeneli, mwana wangayu simudzamutenganso.”

Anthu aja anavomereza kuti Ibe analakwitsa pomenya mkazi wakeyo, ndipo anati palibe amene angaimbe mlandu Obika poteteza mchemwali wake.

“N'chifukwa chiyani timapempha Ulu komanso mizimu yamakolo athu kuti iwonjezere chiwerengero cha-thu ngati si chifukwa chake chimenechi?” anatero yemwe ankatsogolera anthuwo. “Palibe munthu amene amadya chiwerengero cha anthu. Koma tikakhala ambiri, anthu sangayerekeze kumatizunza ndipo atsikana athu sangamenyedwe ngati abulu ndi azimuna awo ankhanza m'ma-

nyumbamu. Mfundo yanga ndi yakuti, Obika sitingamu-imbe mlandu kwambiri chifukwa cha zimene wachitazi. Ndayankhula bwino si choncho abale anga?” anthu anabwera nawo aja anavomereza ndipo iye anapitiriza.

“Sitinganene kuti Obika walakwa poteteza mchemwali wake. Komabe, chinthu chimodzi chimene chikuti-chititsa jenkha ndi ichi: N’chifukwa chiyani mwamuna ngati ameneyu ananyamulidwa kuchokera kwawo n’kubwera naye kuno? Zimene zachitikazi zatikhudza kwambiri. Zikungokhala ngati mukutiuza kuti: *Nonse pamtundu panu ndinu zitsiru zokhazokha ndipo palibe chimene mungachite*. Ndithu asewere anthu, mukationa tikuchita njengunje n’kumakhala ngati tasokonezeka mitu, nkhani yake ndi imeneyi. Ife tabwera kuno osati ngati anzeru koma ngati opusa, paja munthu samapita kwa asewere ake ngati wanzeru. Tikufuna mutimasule pa nkhani imene yakhala ikutisowetsa tuloyi: *Mutiuze ngati tili olakwa komanso mutifotokozere chifukwa chake m’bale wathuyu ananyamulidwa kwawo n’kubwera kuno*. Mukatero tikhutira ndi zimene mutiuze ndipo tinyamuka n’kuona nsanawanjira. Ndiye tsiku lina anthu akadzatiuza kuti: *M’bale wanutu wamenyedwa koopsa ndipo watutidwa n’kupititsidwa kwina*, tikufuna tidzaone chomuyankha. Asewere athu, ulemu wanga upite kwa inu.”

Ezeulu anayesetsa kugwiritsa ntchito luso lake lonse pofuna kutonthoza asewere akewo. Khama lake lina-pindula chifukwa anthuwo anabwerera mitima yawo itatsika. Koma zinali zoonekeratu kuti anthuwo sangakakamize Ibe kuti atenge mtsuko wa uchema n’kupita kwa Ezeulu kukapempha kuti mkazi wake abwererenso kunyumba. Zinkaoneka kuti Akueke akhalabe kunyumba ya bambo ake kwa nthawi yaitali.

Obika anapita kukhumbi la Ezeulu atangomaliza kudya. Monga mwa nthawi zonse, Edogo ndi amene ankayankhula m'malo mwa ana onse kuphatikizaponso Obika, Oduche komanso Nwafo omwenso anali m'khumbimo.

“Mawa ndi tsiku la *Afo*,” anatero Edogo, “ndiye tabwera kuti mutiuze ntchito yoti tigwire.”

“Ezeulu anadya kaye mutu kwa kanthawi chifukwa funsoli linamufikira modzidzimutsa. Kenako anafunsa Obika kuchuluka kwa ntchito imene inatsala kuti igwiridwe kunyumba yake yatsopano.”

“Chimene chatsala ndi nkhekwe ya mkazi wanga basi,” anayankha motero. “Koma ntchito imeneyo ikhoza kudzagwiridwa m'tsogolo chifukwa ngakhale tiimange, palibe chimene tingaikemo kufikira nyengo yokolola koko idzafike.”

“Ayi, ntchito imeneyi sitingaisiye kaye kuti idzagwiridwe m'tsogolo,” anatero Ezeulu. “Sindingalole kuti mkazi amene Obika akwatire adzafikire pakhomo popanda zinthu zina zofunika. Ndikudziwa kuti achinyamata amasiku ano amaona kuti kuchita zimenezi si vuto. Koma kwa nthawi yonse yomwe ine ndingakhale ndi moyo, ndipitirizabe kukuuzani njira yoyenera yochitira zinthu . . . Edogo, m'malo moti undigwirire ntchito ine mawa, udzatenge abale akowa komanso azimayi ndi atsikana onse kuti mukamange nkhekwe ya mkazi wa Obika. Zinthu zochititsa manyazi zikadzachitikira Obika, tonse tidzachita manyazi. Pajatu tsamba likagwa manyazi amagwira mtenngo.”

“Bambo, ndili ndi mawu pang'ono.” Anatero Oduche.

“Ndikumvetsera yankhula, ukuti bwanji?”

Oduche anatsukuluza kukhosi kwake ndipo kwa ka-

nthawi ankakhala ngati lirime lake lamusokonekera.

“N’kuthekatu chipembedzo chake chatsopanochi chamuletsa kuthandiza m’bale wake kumanga nkhekwe ya mkazi amene akufuna kumukwatira,” anatero Obika mwamphamvu.

“Iwetu nthawi zonse umayankhula ngati woduka mutu,” anatero Edogo mwaukali kwambiri. “Kodi waiwala kale nthawi yomweyi kuti Oduche anagwira ntchito molimbika pamene anakuthandiza kumanga nyumba yako? Anthu ena ndi osayamika ndithu, akhoza kukutukwana ngakhale utathyola nsana wako powathandiza!”

“Musandiboole m’makutu inu! Inetu ndikufuna kumva kuchokera kwa Oduche,” anatero Ezeulu, “osati kuchokera kwa ana a akazi anjiru inu.”

“Ndine m’modzi mwa anthu omwe asankhidwa kuti apite ku Okperi mawa laliwisiri kuti tikanyamule katundu wa mphunzitsi watsopano yemwe akubwera kuno,” anaphinya mawu kuchokera mkamwa mwake Oduche.

“Oduche!”

“Bambo!”

“Ndikufuna umvetsere mosamala kwambiri zimene ndikufuna kukuzazi. Moni akapitirira pachigongono, timadziwa kuti zikulowera kwina. Sakhala moninso ameneyo. Kodi ukukumbukira kuti ndi ineyo amene ndinakutumiza kuti upite kwa anthu amenewa? Ndinakutumiza kumeneko chifukwa cha ubwenzi wanga ndi mzungu uja, Wintabota. Anandipempha kuti nditumize mwana wanga m’modzi kuti akaphunzire njira za anthu ake ndipo ine ndinavomera n’kukutumiza iweyo. Sindinakutumize kumeneko kuti usiye kugwira ntchito zapakhomo pano. Wamva zimene ndanenazi? Choncho pita ukauze anthu ameneyo akutuma ku Okperiwo kuti ndakukaniza. Ukawauzenso kuti mawa ndi tsiku limene ana anga onse aamuna, aakazi

komanso azikazi anga amandigwirira ntchito. Anthu akowo ayenera kudziwa chikhalidwe chathu. Ngati sakuchidziwa uyenera kukhala nawo pansi n'kuwalongosolera chimodzichimodzi. Tili limodzi?"

"Ndamva bambo."

"Pita ukaitane mayi ako abwere kuno. Ndikuganiza kuti mawa akuyenera kundiphikira chakudya ndi iwowo."

2

Ezeulu anakonda kunena kuti makolo a fuko la Umuaro, omwe anamwalira kalekale, akamayang'ana padziko lapansi kuchokera kudziko lamizimu la Ani-Mmo amadabwa kwambiri ndi njira za achinyamata amakono. Kungochokera kale, palibenso nthawi ina pamene anthu a ku Umuaro anapitapo kunkhondo zinthu zitasokonekera ngati mmene zinaliri pa nthawiyi. Ndi ndani amene akanalota kuti tsiku lina Umuaro adzapita kunkhondo anthu ake ali ogawanika kotheratu? Ndi ndani amene akanalota kuti tsiku lina anthuwa adzafika ponyalanyaza chenjezo la wansembe wa Ulu, wansembe yemwe analunzanitsa midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro n'kuithandiza kuti anthu asiye kuionera m'botolo? Zikuoneka kuti Umuaro anali atayamba kuchuluka nzeru komanso kudzionika kuti ndi wamphamvu ngati kambalame kena kakang'ono kotchedwa *nza*. Kambalameka kamati kakakhuta kamayamba kutukwana mulungu yemwe amayang'anira moyo wake. Umuaro anali atayamba kuchitira mwano mulungu wake yemwe anachititsa kuti fukolo likhalepo. Ndiye, akamayembekezeranso zotani koposa kupetedwa, kutibulidwa komanso kukhailitsidwa kotheratu ndi mulungu wawoyo.

Kalekalelo, abuluza akadali ochepa padziko lapansi, midzi ya Umuachala, Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu ndi Umuisiuzo inali yodziimira payokha. Mudzi uliwonse unkalambira mulungu wake komanso

unali ndi miyambo yake. Kenako asilikali a ku Abam anayamba kumabwera ndi usiku n’kumapha anthu, kuyatsa nyumba zawo komanso kugwira amuna, akazi ndi ana n’kuwatenga ukapolo. Zinthu sizinkayenda bwino m’midzi isanu ndi umodzi imeneyi moti atsogoleri a midziyi anaganiza zomanga umodzi kuti apulumutse midzi yawo m’manja mwa zilombo zolusazi.

Iwo anapeza sing’anga wamphamvu kwambiri kuti awapangire mulungu. Anthu a midzi isanu ndi umodziyi anapatsa mulungu ameneyu dzina lakuti Ulu. Theka la mankhwala omwe anapangira mulunguyu analikwirira pamalo ena omwe anayamba kutchedwa *Nkwo* ndipo m’kupita kwa nthawi pamalowa m’pamene pankakhala msika. Theka linalo analiponya mumtsinje womwe unayamba kudziwika kuti *Mili Ulu*. Kenako midzi yonse isanu ndi iwiri inagwirizana n’kudzipatsa dzina lakuti Umuaro ndipo wansembe wa Ulu anayamba kutchedwa Mkulu Wansembe ndipo ansembe a mulungu ya midzi ina ija anakhala pansipake. Kungochokera tsiku limenelo, midzi ya Umuaro sinagonjetsedwenso ndi adani ake ndipo palibenso amene ankayerekeza kuiputa dala. Koma kodi ndi ndani amene anawalodza kuti ayambe kunyoza mulungu yemwe anawalunzanitsa n’kumawateteza? Ezeulu ankaona kuti anthu amenewa apepetulidwa ndipo sankakayikira kuti chime-necho ndi chiyambi cha mavuto oopsa komanso chizindikiro cha kutha kwa dziko.

Zaka zisanu zapitazo, madoda a Umuaro—kapena kuti anthu omwe anapatsidwa mipando yaulemu chifukwa cha ntchito zawo zakupsa—ndiponso amuna ena olozeka, anaganiza zotumiza akazembe a nkondo ku Okperi chifukwa cha kusamvana kwawo pa nkhani ya malo. Anatumiza akazembewo ndi choko choyera ngati chizindikiro chamtendere komanso uchema wongofululidwa kumene

ngati chizindikiro cha nkondo. Anthu a ku Okperiwo ankafunika kusankha chimodzi. Ankafunika kusankha choko popereka mwaulemu malowo kapena kusankha uchema kuti angomenyanapo. Pamene ankachita zimenezi, Ezeulu anayesetsa kuwathandiza kuganiza. Anawalongozola tsatanetsatane wa kuipa kowakanda anzawowo padazi. Zimene ananena sizinaphule kanthu moti ankangokhala ngati akudulira mpeni wochekera madzi. Ezeulu anawatsimikizira amuna onse a mu Umuaro kuti Ulu sangawathandize kumenya nkondo yachipsera mtima komanso yopanda chilungamo ngati imeneyo.

“Chomwe ine ndikudziwa,” iye anawauza choncho, “ndi choti bambo anga anandiuza kuti pamene anthu am’mudzi wathu ankabwera kudzakhala kuno, malo amenetimakhalawa anali a ku Okperi. Makolo athu anachita kupempha malo kwa anthu amenewa ndipo chifukwa cha chifundo chawo anawagaira pokhala. Posonyeza kuti awalandira, anawapatsanso milungu yawo—monga Udo komanso Ogwugwu. Koma anawauza kuti—mumvetsetsetu zimene ndikunenazi—anthu aku Okperi anauza makolo athuwo kuti: *Tikukupatsani milungu yathuyi, Udo komanso Ogwugwu; koma simuyenera kutchula mulungu takupatsaniyu kuti Udo koma muzimutcha mwana wa Udo. Komanso musamatchule mulungu winayu kuti Ogwugwu koma muzimuti mwana wa Ogwugwu*. Imeneyi ndi mbiri imene bambo anga anandiuza. Ndiye ngati mukufuna kumenyana nawo chifukwa cha malo olima omwe anachita kukugairani, ine zisandikhudze.”

Koma Nwaka anakakamira maganizo ake. Iye anali m’modzi mwa anthu atatu m’midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi, omwe anali olemkezeka kwambiri chifukwa chopatsidwa mpando waulemu wapamwamba kwambiri mu Umuaro yense wotchedwa Eru. Mpandowu unkadziwika

ndi dzina la mulungu wopereka chuma weniweniyo. Nwaka anachokera m'banja lomwe linali ndi ndandanda wautali wa anthu olozeka komanso m'mudzi womwe unkadziona kuti ndi wapamwamba kwambiri kuposa midzi ina yonse. Anthu ankanena kuti pamene midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi inkamanga umodzi wawo, wansembe wa Ulu anapereka nsembe yofooka kwambiri poimira mudziwu kuti pasapezeke mudzi umodzi wokula mphamvu kwambiri.

"Umuaro kwenu!" anatero ndi pamapeto pa mawu ake Nwaka, wopereka malonje kwa amene anasonkhana.

"Hem!" anayankha mogwirizana amuna a mu Umuaro.

"Kwenu!"

"Hem!"

"Kwezuenu!"

"Hem!"

Kenako anayamba kuyankhula modekha pambuyo pobweretsa chibata chachikulu ndi malonje akewa.

"Nzeru zili ngati chikwama chachikopa chambuzi; aliyense amanyamula chake. Ndi mmenenso ziliri nzeru zakwathu kuno. Ezeulu watitambasulira momveka bwino zomwe makolo ake anamufotokozera padzana. Tikudziwa kuti bambo sangauze mwana wake zinthu zabodza. Komanso timadziwa kuti mbiri ya dziko lathu lino ndi yakale kwambiri kuposa makolo athu. Zikanakhala kuti Ezeulu wanena kuti anamuuza zimenezi ndi mulungu wamphamvu wa Umuaro, yemwe iyeyo amamunyamula paphewa pake komanso yemwe bambo ake anamunyamula iye asanakhale wansembe, ndikanamvera mawu ake. Koma akuyankhula zinthu zomwe zinachitika kale kwambiri mtundu wathu wa Umuaro usanakhalepo. Ine sindikuopa kunena kuti ngakhale Ezeulu kapena munthu aliyense wam'mudzi muno sangatiuze zolondola zokhudza nkhani imeneyi."

Atangonena zimenezi, anthu ena anayamba kuyankhula monong'ona mosonyeza kukwiya ndi zimene zinkanenedwazo, pomwe ena ankasonyeza kuti agwirizana nazo. Zikuoneka kuti amuna ambiri olemkezeka komanso madoda amipando yaulemu ankagwirizana ndi Nwaka. Nwaka ankayankhula akulowera uku ndi uku; nthenga ya chiwombankhanga yomwe inali pachisoti chake chofiira komanso zibangiri zachitsulo zomwe zinali muakakolo ake zikukhala ngati zikulengeza kuti iyeyo si munthu wamba. Iye anali munthu woyanjidwa ndi Eru, mulungu wopereka chuma kwa munthu yemwe wakondwera naye.

“Bambo anga anandiuza nkhani yosiyana ndi ime-neyi. Anandiuza kuti anthu a ku Okperi anali ongoyenda-yenda, osowa pokhala. Iwo sanandibisire za malo angapo omwe anapempha malo n’kuthamangitsidwako. Iwo anapirikitsidwa ndi anthu a ku Umuofia, kenako a ku Abame ndiponso a ku Aninta. Ngakhale atakhala kuti akhuta uchema, kodi angangodzuka lero ndi lero n’kupita kumadera amenewo n’kumakanena kuti akufuna malo awo? Kodi mukuganiza kuti akanabwera kuno n’kudzanena kuti malo amenewa ndi awo zikanakhala kuti azungu sanabwere n’kutiwombanitsa mitu? Madoda komanso *Ndichie* za mu Umuaro, aliyense abwerere kunyumba kwake ngati tilibe mtima womenya nkhondo. Ifeyo tisakhale anthu oyamba kulandidwa malo athu n’cholinga chongofuna kupewa nkhondo kapena pongofuna kusangalatsa munthu winawake woganiza mwausiwa. Komanso tisamadzinamize kapena kumanamiza ana anthu kuti malo amenewa ndi a anthu a mtundu wina. Tiyeni tiwauze kuti makolo awo sanafune kulimbana nafe pa nkhani ya malo, ndiye iwowo asatidzimbukire lero ayi. Komanso tiwauze kuti ifeyo timakwatira ana awo aakazi komanso iwo amakwatira ana anthu aakazi moti pamene pali kusakanikirana

kwa magazi kotereku, amuna amasowa mphamvu zome-nyera nkhondo. Umuaro Kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Kwezuenu!”

“Hem!”

“Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Kuwomba m’manja komwe kunaphulika pambuyo pa mawu amenewa kunkasonyeza kuti anthu agwirizana nazo. Nwaka anali atasungunuliratu zomwe Ezeulu ananena. Chikwanje china chomwe chinamusengeratu Ezeulu chinali choti mayi ake anachokeranso ku Okperi komweko. Gulu la anthu omwe anabwera pankhumanowo linagawikanagawikana m’timagulu tambirimbi, aliynse ankayankhula ndi amene wamuyandikira. Anthu ena ankalavula chipongwe cholama zedi. Mwachitsanzo wina ananena kuti Ezeulu wangoiwala ngati analidi bambo ake omwe anamuuza nkhanu ya malo olimayo. Ankati akhoza kukhala mayi ake omwe anamuuza zabodza popeza nawonso anali ochokera ku Okperi komweko. Kenako anthu anayamba kuimirira m’modzim’modzi n’kumanena maganizo awo mpaka pamene zinali zoonekeratu kuti midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi inali kumbali ya Nwaka. Ezeulu sanali munthu yekhayo yemwe mayi ake anachokera ku Okperi, koma palibe ngakhale m’modzi amene anayerekeza kukhala kumbali yake. Ndipo m’modzi mwa anthu amenewa, yemwe ankayankhula mwapayererepayere akamva za nkhondo, ndi amene anali anasankhidwa kuti atenge choko choyera komanso uchema n’kupita kudziko la mayi ake ku Okperi. Dzina la munthu ameneyu linali Akukalia. Mawu okhawo amene ankatuluka pakamwa pake ankakhala oopsa kuposa imfa. Pakamwa pake pankangotuluka mawu akuti, “kupha ndi kuwononga” basi.

Munthu womalizira kuyankhula pamsonkhanowo

anali wachikulire wina wochokera m'mudzi wa Akukalia. Mawu ake ankamveka ngati akuchokera mumtsuko, koma anthu ankamumva bwinobwino ndithu, ngakhale ame-ne anali kumapeto kwenikweni kwa msika wa *Nkwo* ume-ne pankachitikira msonkhanowu. Posonyeza kuyamikira kuyesetsa kwake poyankhula mokweza kwambiri, amuna a mu Omuaro anayankha mwamphamvu kwambiri malonje ake kuposa mmene ankayankhira anthu ena aja kuti “Hem!” Atamaliza kupereka malonjewa, ananena kuti apume kaye kuti asalenguke n'kugwera pansi chifukwa cha chizungulire. Anthu omwe anamumva akunena zime-nezi anayamba kusekera kukhudu.

“Ndikufuna kuyankhula ndi anthu omwe tikuwatu-ma ku Okperi. Padutsa nthawi yaitali kwambiri kungochokera pamene tinamenya nkondo ndipo n'kutheka kuti ambiri mwa inu simukukumbukira mwambo womwe timatsatira. Sindikunena zimenezi chifukwa cha Akukalia. Koma ndine munthu wokalamba tsopano ndipo munthu wokalamba ndi amene amafunika kumayankhula kuti awongole zinthu zimene zikupotoka. Ngati mphaka wam'nyumba atamalephera kuchita zimene amayenera kuchita, anthu akhoza kuyamba kumusokoneza ndi vumbwe.”

“Mmene Akukalia wayankhulira, ndi zoonekeratu kuti ali ndi nkwiyo waukulu. Sindikunena kuti akulakwa kumva choncho mumtima mwake chifukwa umenewo ndi ufulu wake. Komabe, ayenera kukumbukira kuti sitikumutumiza kudziko la mayi ake kuti akamenye nkondo. Tikukutumiza iwe Akukalia kuti ukapereke mwayi kwa anthuwo kuti asankhe mtendere kapena nkondo. Kodi zimene ndikuyankhulazi ndikuyankhula m'malo mwa anthu a mu Umuaro?”

Anthu onse anamupatsa mphamvu kuti apitirize.

“Ife sitikufuna kuti anthu a ku Okperi asankhe nkondo, chifukwa palibe amene amadya nkondo. Aka-sankha mtendere, tisangalala kwambiri. Koma chilichonse chimene akanene usakalimbane nawo. Ntchito yako ndi kubweretsa uthenga womwe angakakupatsire basi. Tonse timadziwa kuti ndiwe munthu wopanda mantha. Komabe ukakafika kumeneko, ukavule kaye kupanda mantha kwa-koko n’kukulonedza m’thumba. Ngati anyamata amene utapite nawo azikayankhula zoduka mutu, iweyo uzika-kwirira zolakwa zawo. Ineyo ndili m’nyamata ndinapitapo pa ulendo ngati umenewu ndipo ndimadziwa ziyeso zo-mwe munthu amakumana nazo akapita paulendo wauka-zembe kudzikola lina. Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Ezeulu atangomva zimene zinanenedwazo ana-mwetulira ndi nkwiyo woopsa ndipo anadzuka pamene anakhala modzidzimukira ngati walumidwa ndi mdzodzo.

“Umuaro kwenu!” anatero Ezeulu.

“Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu,” anapereka malonjewa ngati mmene chimachitira chinyawu chokwiya kwambiri. “Munthu wamkulu akakhala kuti alipo pakhommo, mbuzi yankota simangosiyidwa yokha kuti izivutika kubereka.’ Zimenezi ndi zimene makolo athu kalelo ankana. Koma kodi n’chiyani chimene tikuona lero? Tikuona anthu akuyankhula kokha kuti asaoneke ngati akhwangwala. Ena amene ayankhula angoyankhula chifukwa ali ndi ludzu lankhondo. Koma tiyeni tisiye kaye nkhanu imeneyi pambali. Ngati malo olimawa alidi athu, Ulu atithandiza kumenya nkondoyi. Koma ngati malowo si athu, sindikukayikira kuti muona nokha ndi maso anu zimene zichitike. Sindikanadzuka n’kuyankhulanso zikanakhala kuti sindinaone munthu wachikulire akunyalanyaza zona za mulungu wathu. Egbuefi Egonwanne, monga m’modzi mwa anthu atatu achikulire kwambiri mu Umuaro

monse muno, akanatikumbutsa kuti makolo athu sankamenya nkondo zachipseramtima. Koma m'malo mwake waphunzitsa akazembe athu kunyamula moto ndi madzi mkamwa limodzi. Kodi simunamvepo kuti mwana amene watumidwa ndi bambo ake kuti akabe samapita mwakachetechete, koma amakathyola chitseko mwankokomo woopsa? N'chifukwa chiyani Egonwanne akuvutika ndi zinthu zing'onozing'ono ngati udzudzu n'kumanyalanyaza zinthu zikuluzikulu ngati njovu? N'zoonekeratu kuti ife tikufuna nkondo basi. Mmene Akukalia angakalankhulire ndi anthu a kwawo kwa mayi ake ndi nkhani yaing'ono kwambiri. Akhozanso kukawatukwana kapena kukawalavulira kumaso ngati akufuna. Mukamva zoti nyumba yagwa, kodi mumafusanso ngati denga lake lagwa nayo limodzi? Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu."

Tsiku lotsatira tambala atangolira, Akukalia ndi anzake awiri aja anauyamba wa ku Okperi. M'chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi anaikamo choko komanso makhwaule omwe anawadula kumsonga kwa mtengo wa gwalangwa. Aliyense anatenganso chikwanje chomwe anachiika m'chigombe chake.

Tsiku limeneli linali lamsika wa Eke, ndipo posakhalitsa Akukalia komanso anzake aja anayamba kukumana ndi azimayi ochokera m'midzi yoyandikira akupita kumsika wotchuka kwambiri wa Eke Okperi. Ambiri mwa azimayiwa anali ochokera ku Elumelu komanso ku Abame. Anthu am'maderawa anali akatswiri opanga mitsuko m'dziko lonselo. Aliyense wa anthuwa anali atasenza mitsuko mwina isanu kapena isanu ndi umodzi, mwinanso kuposa pamenepo. Mitsukoyi ankailongedza m'magondolo aatali n'kuwamanga ndi luzi kenako n'kusenza.

Pamene amuna ochokera ku Umuarowa ankadutsa magulu a azimayi atadendekera magondolo awo, anaya-

mba kukambirana za msika waukulu wa Eke Okperi womwe anthu ochuluka kwambiri a mtundu wa Igbo komanso Olu ankapitako kukatakata malonda awo.

“Zimamveka kuti msika umenewu unayamba ndi mankhwala enaake akale kwambiri,” anatero Akukalia. “Anthu a mtundu wa mayi anga ndi odziwa zitsamba kwambiri.” Iye ananena zimenezi monyadirira. “Poyamba Eke unali msika waung’ono kwambiri. Misika ina yomwe inazungulira msikawu inkakokolola anthu onse moti unau-miratu. Koma kenako amuna a ku Okperi anapanga mulungu wawo wamphamvu kwambiri ndipo anadzamuika pamsika wawowu kuti aziuyang’anira. Kungochokera tsiku limenelo msika wa Eke unayamba kukula mpaka kuposa misika yonse. Mulungu anamuika pamsikawo dzina lake ndi Nwanyieke ndipo ndi mzimayi wokalamba kwambiri. Tsiku lililonse lamsika tambala asanalire, mzimayiyo amabwera pamsikapo atagwira tsache kudzanja lake lamanja ndipo amayamba kuvina pabwalo la msikawo akulozetsa tsachelo kungodya zinayi za dziko lapansi ngati muitano kuti anthu ochokera m’madera onse abwere kumsikawo. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake anthu sayerekeza kubwera pafupi ndi msikawu tambala asanalire. Ngati atachita zimenezi akhoza kuona malodza n’kupeza nkhalamba yakale lomweyo itagundika nako kuvina.”

“Anthu amanenanso zofananazo ndi msika wa *Nkwo* womwe uli pafupi ndi mtsinje waukulu ku Umuru,” anatero munthu wina yemwe anali paulendowu limodzi ndi Akukalia. “Kumeneko mankhwala ake anagwira ntchito kwambiri moti m’malo momangokhala ndi misika pa tsiku la *Nkwo* basi, misika imachitikanso masiku ena.”

“Koma anthu a ku Umuru sangapose anthu a kwa mayi anga pa nkhani ya mankhwala,” anatero Akukalia. “Msika wawo wakula chifukwa choti azungu anatsegula

makantini awo kumeneko.”

“Nanga mukuganiza kuti n’chifukwa chiyani azunguwo anakatsegula makantini awo kumeneko m’malo mochita zimenezo m’misika inayi?” anafunsa munthu wina uja, “Ndi muitanotu umene unawakopa. Mayi wokalamba wamsika umene uja anasesa dziko lonse ndi tsache lake, anasesa ngakhale kudziko la azungu komwe mphekesera zimamveka kuti dzuwa silituluka.”

“Kodi n’zoonza izi zikumamveka zoti mayi wina wachizungu anatuluka panja dzuwa likuswa mtengo asanavale chisoti chake, moti mutu wake unasungunuka ngati mafuta?” anafunsanso munthu wina wachiwiri uja.

“Nanenso ndinamvadi mbiri imeneyo,” anatero Akukalia. “Koma zimandikayikitsa chifukwa anthu masiku ano akumanena mabodza ambiri onena za azungu. Ndinamvapo ena akunena kuti anthu amenewa sakhala ndi zala zakumapazi.”

Pamene dzuwa linkakwera, amunawa anadutsa kumene kunali malo omwe anawutsa mapiri pachigwa aja. Malowo anakhala osalimidwa kwa zaka zambiri ndithu, ndipo panali thengo lokhalokha.

“Ndimakumbukira kuti nthawi ina ndinkabwera kuno ndi bambo anga kudzamweta udzu wokafolerera nyumba,” anatero Akukalia. “N’zodabwitsa kwambiri kuti anthu a kwa mayi anga aganiza lero zoyamba kunena kuti malowa ndi awo.”

“Zimenezi zikuchitika chifukwa cha mzungu ali kunoyu. Zimene mzungu ameneyu akumanena n’zofanana ndi zimene ena amayankhula ana akamafuna kumenyana. Amawauza kuti: *Musayerekeze kumenyana ine ndili pompano*. Kenako mwana wamng’ono komanso wopanda mphamvu amayamba kufufuma ndi makani komanso kudzitama kwinaku akunyoza wamkuluyo kuti sakume-

nyana naye chifukwa chomuopa.”

“Zimene wanenazo ndi zoona zenizeni,” anatero Akukalia.

“Zimene zikuchitika panozi sizinkachitika ndili mwana. Malowa anali athu ndipo ndimakumbukira zonse zimene zinkachitika,” ananena zimenezi akuloza kumene kunali malo aja. “Pa nthawi ina mtengo wa *ebenebe* uli apowo unawombedwa ndi mphenzi ndipo anthu omwe ankamweta udzu chakumeneko anabalalikira mbali zosiyanasiyana akulira.”

“Chofunika kuwafunsa n’chakuti,” anatero munthu wina uja yemwe anayankhula zochepa kwambiri kungochokera pamene ananyamuka, “atiuze chifukwa chimene ankatilolera kumalima komanso kumweta udzu kwa mibadwomibadwo, kufikira pamene mzungu anabwera n’kuwakumbutsa kuti malowo ndi awo. Ankatiloleranji kuchita zimenezi ngati ankadziwa kuti malowo ndi awo?”

“Cholinga chimene tabwerera kuno si kudzawakhamitsa mate ndi mafunso ambirimбири. Tikungofuna atiyankhe funso limodzi lokha lomwe anthu a ku Umuaro akufuna kumva yankho lake,” anatero Akukalia. “Ndipo ndikuganiza kuti m’pofunika ndikukumbutseninsokuti musunge malirime anuwo m’manja kufikira titachoka kuno. Tikakafika kumeneku musakanene chilichonse. Zonse mundisiyire ineyo. Anthu ake ndi mavunkhomola; ngakhalenso mayi anga anali owirira zedi. Koma ineyo ndimawadziwa bwino kwambiri. Ngati munthu wa ku Okperi atakuuza kuti bwera, ndiye kuti akutanthauza kuti uthawe ndi mphamvu zako zonse. Ngati utakhala kuti sukuwadziwa bwinobwino ukhoza kukhala nawo kuchokera m’bandakucha mpaka nkhuku kukalowa, kucheza nawo komanso kudya nawo limodzi, koma kenako m’mawa n’kupezeka kuti thupi lako likuyandama mumtsinje wa-

pafupi atakulumitsa mano. Ndiye musiyire ineyo zonse chifukwa ineyo ndi tambwali ngati iwowo. Monga muku-dziwira, atambwali sametana.”

Nthumwi zitatu zinalowa mu Okperi pa nthawi imene ambiri ankamaliza kudya mfwisuro. Iwo anakhoma ndawala n’kumayenda molunjika kunyumba kwa Uduezue, yemwe anali wachibale wapafupi wa mayi a Akukalia. N’kutheka kuti nkhope zokwiya za alendowa ndi zimene zinamudetsa nkhawa Uduezue. N’kuthekanso kuti anada nkhawa chifukwa choti anthu a ku Okperi anali asanakonzeke kulandira akazembe a nkhondo ochokera ku Umuaro. Ngakhale zinali choncho, Uduezue anawafunsa kuti kumene achokera akusiya bwanji.

“Kuli bwino,” anayankha mosachulutsa mawu Akukalia. “Tabwera ndi uthenga wofunika kwambiri woti tidzautule kwa madoda a ku Okperi mwansanga.”

“Zoon?” anafunsa Uduezue. “Inensotu ndimadzifunsa kuti: *N’chiyani chachititsa kuti mwana wanga komanso anthu ake abwere m’mawa ngati uno kuchokera komwe ku Umuaro? Zikanakhala kuti mchemwali wanga—ndikunena mayi ako—adakali moyo, ndikanaganiza kuti chinachake chamuchitikira.*” Kenako anapumira kaye pang’ono. “Ndiye mwati mwabwera kudzatula uthenga wofunika kwambiri? Chabwino, paga amati mbululu simathawa pokhapokha ngati pali chinachake chomwe chikuika moyo wake pachiopsezo. Sindikufuna kukuchedwetsani, komabe dikirani kaye pang’ono kuti ndikupatseni mtedza wa kola.” Kenako anaimirira.

“Musavutike malume. Mwina tikhoza kubweranso kuno tikatula uthengawu. Uthenga umene tanyamula ukutilemera kwambiri moti pokhapokha titautula, sitingadye kapena kumwa kanthu.”

“Ndikumvetsa. Chabwino ingotengani choko cho-

yerachi. Mukhoza kupita kukatula uthengawo, mtedza wa kolawu ndidzaswa mukabwera.”

Koma amuna atatuwo anakananso kulemba mizere ndi choko choyera chija. Atangokana kuchita zimenezi, Uduezue analibenso chonena. Iwo anali atakana kuchita zinthu zosonyeza kufunirana zabwino pakati pa mlendo ndi mwinikhomo.

Uduezue anakalowa kumpanda wake ndipo ana-bwerako atatenga chikopa chake chambuzi komanso chikwanje.

“Tiyeni ndikuperekezeni kwa munthu amene angakalandire uthenga wanuwo,” anatero Uduezue.

Iye anatsogolera njira ndipo anthu atatu aja ankamutsatira mwakachetechete. Iwo anadutsa mkatikati mwa fumbi la anthu omwe anali mumsika uja. Popeza nyengo yobzala mbewu inali itayandikira, ambiri mwa anthuwo anasenza mitanga ikuluikulu ya zilazi. Azibambo ena anasenza magondolo omwe anaikamo mbuzi. Ankakumananso ndi azimayi ena atanyamula nkukhu kumanja. Azimayiwo ankayenda mothimbwidzika komanso moyerekedwa kwambiri ngati akuponda pamoto. Amene ankayenda moterewa ankaoneka kuti zinthu zimawayendera bwino pa moyo wawo. Kumsikawu kunali azimayi ambiri omwe ankayankhulira pansonga za lirime atagwira kumanja tizinthu tomwe anagula, tina atakwapatira kunkhwapa pocho-ka mumsikawu. Ena sankayankhula ndipo ichi chinali chizindikiro choti kumeneku si kwawo. N’kutheka kuti alendo ambiri sankayankhula chifukwa anali atatoperatu ndi ulendo wautali womwe anayenda. Akukalia ataona ena mwa azimayiwo, anawakumbukira kuti ndi amene anawadutsa pamene ankabwera paga.

Panali patatha zaka zitatu zathunthu Akukalia asanabwere kudzacheza kumudzi kwa mayi akeku ndipo nga-

khale kunali kwawo, nayenso ankangokhala ngati mlendo. Pamene ankabwera kumudziwu ndi mayi ake kalelo, iye ankadabwa kuti dothi komanso mchenga wa ku Okperi zinali zoyera m'malo mooneka mwakatondo ngati ku Umuaro. Atawafunsa mayi ake kuti n'chifukwa chiyani pali kusiyanaku, anamuyankha kuti dothilo ndi loyera chifukwa anthu a ku Okperi ndi aukhondo komanso amasamba tsiku lililonse, pomwe anthu a ku Umuaro amatha kutha mlungu wathunthu thupi lawo osaona madzi. Choncho chifukwa cha kusasamba komanso uve, litsiro loti likhoza kugumbutulidwa ndi zala limachita kuwamera pansana. Mayi ake sankanyengerera munthu poyankhula, ndipo kunena mosabisa chichewa anali ovuta ngati kusefukira kwa madzi. Komabe, ngakhale Akukalia ankadziwa kuti mayi akewo ndi moto, ankawakondabe kwambiri.

Uduezue anatengera alendo atatu aja kunyumba kwa Otikpo. Otikpo anali ndi udindo wolengeza mautheinga ku Okperi. Pa nthawiyo n'kuti ali mu *obi* wake, akukonza zilazi zoti akagulitse kumsika. Ataona alendowo anadzuka nsangansanga n'kuwalonjera. Iye anatchula Uduezue ndi dzina lake ndiponso udindo wake. Anatchulanso Akukalia kuti chidzukululu chake. Koma sanapereke moni wapachanza kwa alendo ena awiri aja chifukwa sankawadziwa. Otikpo anali wamtali ngati nsungwi komanso wooneka monyozololoka ngati mwana wodwala matenda osowa zakudya m'thupi. Ukamuyang'ana mopanda mantha, Otikpo ankaonekabe ngati katswiri wochita masewera othamanga ndipo amenewa ndi masewera omwe ankadya nawo moto ali wachinyamata.

Posakhalitsa analowetsa alendowo mu *obi* wake ndipo analowa kuchipinda chamkati n'kukatenga mkeka n'kuuyala pakama wozira yemwe anali pofikira alendo. Posakhalitsa kunatulukira kamtsikana kena kakutikita

m' maso.

“Pita kaye uko Ogbanje,” anatero Otikpo kwa kamtsikanako. “Sukuona kuti kwabwera alendo?”

“Nweke akumenyana.”

“Ndimukwapulabe alendowa akachoka. Pita ukamuze kuti ndimukwapula.”

“Otikpo, bwanji tipite kaye panja kuti ndikakulume khutu pang'ono,” anatero Uduezue.

Iwo anatulukadi ndipo panjapo sanachedwepo. Atabwerera, Otikpo anabweretsa mtedza wa kola m'mbale.

Akukalia anamuthokoza chifukwa cha mtima wake wochereza alendo koma anamuza kuti iyeyo ndi anzake aja anyamula uthenga wolemera kwambiri moti sangadye kapena kumwa chilichonse pokhapokha atatula mtolo wolemerawo.

“Mwatero?” anafunsa Otikpo. “Kodi mtolo mukunenawu ndiyenera kukutulani ndekha kapena mufuna mutakumana ndi madoda olemkezeka?”

“Tingakonde titakumana ndi madodawo.”

“Komatu ndiye mwabwera tsiku lolakwika. Munthu aliyense m'dziko la Igbo lino amadziwa kuti anthu a ku Okperi sachita chilichonse pa tsiku lawo la Eke. Mwina mukanabwera dzulo kapena dzana. Kapenanso mwina mukanabwera mawa kapena mkucha,” kenako anatembenukira kwa Akukalia, “Ndikuganiza kuti iweyo uyenera ukudziwa bwino chikhalidwe cha anthu a kuno.”

“Chikhalidwe chanu sichisiyana ndi chikhalidwe chakwathu,” anatero Akukalia. “Koma uthenga wathuwu sukanadikira mawa.”

“Mwatero?” anatero Otikpo. Kenako anatuluka panja ndipo mokweza mawu anayamba kuitana munthu wina yemwe ankakhala nyumba yapafupi, dzina lake Ebo, ndipo munthuyu atayankha analowanso m'nyumba muja.

“Mwati uthengawo sukanadikira mawa? Ndiye mukuganiza kuti tipanga bwanji? Mwinatu mungogona kuti mawa mmawa mudzakumane ndi madoda mukufunawo.”

Ebo anatulukira ndipo anapereka malonje kwa onse. Iye anadzidzimuka ataona kuti m’nyumbamo munali anthu ambiri mosiyana ndi mmene ankaganizira moti poyamba anachita zinthu mobalalika pang’ono. Kenako anayamba kupereka moni wapadzanja kwa onse, koma atafika pa Akukalia anakana kugwira dzanja lake.

“Basi kakhaleni pansi Ebo,” anatero Otikpo.

“Akukalia wanyamula uthenga wolemera pobwera kuno ndipo akukana kudya mtedza wa kora ngakhale kugwira dzanja la munthu. Akufuna kukumana ndi madoda onse a kuno ndipo ndamuuza kale kuti zimenezo sizingatheke lerolo, koma mawa.”

“N’chifukwa chiyani anasankha kubweretsa uthengawu lero m’malo mobwera masiku apitawa? Kodi nawonso sakhala ndi msika kwawoko patsiku la lero? Ngati nkhani imene mwandiitanira ili imeneyi, ndiloleni ndibwerere kuti ndikapitirize kukonza zinthu zoti ndikagulitse kumsika.”

“Uthenga wathu sungadikire, ndipo ndikuganiza kuti ndang’amba pakamwa panga mokwanira ponena zimenezi.”

“Ineyo sindinamvepo za uthenga womwe sungadikire. Kapena mwabweretsa uthenga woti Chukwu, mulungu wamkulu, akufuna kuwononga dziko lapansili? Ngati si choncho, dziwani kuti anthu a kuno ku Eke Okperi sangatseguke m’mimba chifukwa choti m’mudzi mwawo mwabwera amuna atatu ochokera ku Umuaro. Ngati mutamvetsera bwinobwino, mukhoza kumva phokoso la anthu obwera kumsika, ndipo panopa sikuti msika wafika pachiindeinde. Anthu akadzazanakoko umatha kuumva ngakhale

uli ku Umuda. Kodi mukuganiza kuti msika ngati umene-wu ungaimitsidwe kaye kuti timvetsere uthenga umene mwabweretsawo?” Kenako anakhala pansi ndipo kwa kanthawi palibe amene anayankhula.

“Ukhoza kuonanso wekha chidzukululu chanthu, kuti sizingatheke kuti tisonkhanitse madoda onse dzuwa lisanalowe,” anatero Otikpo.

“Makolo a mayi anga, kodi nkondo ikabwera m’mudzi wanuwu, mumaitana bwanji madoda mukunenawo? Kodi mumadikira kuti kunja kude kaye kenako kuche kuti muwasonkhanitse pamodzi? Kodi simuliza *ikolo?*”

Atangomva zimenezi, Ebo ndi Otikpo anaseka chikhakhade. Anthu atatu omwe anachokera ku Umuaro aja anangoyang’anizana modabwa. Nthawi yomweyo nkhope ya Akukalia inayamba kuoneka moopsa ngati ya chilombo cholusa. Uduezue anali atakhala mmene anachitira pame-ne anafika pakhomopa. Kungochokera pamene anafika, iye ankatekenya ndevu kuchigama kwake ndi dzanja lamanzere.

“Anthu amakhala ndi miyambo yosiyanasiyana,” anatero Otikpo atamaliza kuseka kuja. “Kwathu kuno sitilandira alendo obwera kumsika powaimbira *ikolo.*”

“Kodi makolo a mayi anga, mukufuna mutanthauze kuti ifeyo tikuoneka ngati zitsiru? Kapena tikuoneka ngati azimayi a kumsika? Ndapirira mnyozo wanuwu mokwanira. Mwina ndikukumbutseni kuti dzina langa ndi Okeke Akukalia wa ku Umuaro.”

“Owo-o, wati wa ku Umuaro,” anatero Ebo mosonyeza kuti akumvabe ululu chifukwa choti anakana kumugwira chanza pamene amafuna kumupatsa moni paga. “Ndasangalala kuti wanena kuti wa ku Umuaro. Kunotu si ku Umuaro, ndi ku Okperi.”

“Bambo ngati mano anu mumawakonda, bwanji mubwerere kunyumba kwanu mwaulemu?” anayankhula mokalipa Akukalia, “apo ayi ndikhoza kukuonetsani zakuda.”

“Ngati ukufuna kumakuwa ngati ng’ombe yofulidwa, dikira kaye mpaka utabwerera ku Umuaro. Ndakuuza kale kuti kuno ndi ku Okperi.”

Kaya anayankhula zimenezi modziwa kaya ayi, Ebo ananena mawu achipongwe kwambiri omwe sankayenera kumuuzza Akukalia. Akukalia anali munthu woti anagwa mumpapaya ndipo akazi ake awiri anachita kufika pope-rekedwa mwachinsinsi kwa afisi ena kuti amuberekere ana.

Zimene zinachitika pamenepa zinali zoziziritsa thupi. Ebo sanali woti angalimbane ndi Akukalia. Posakhaltitsa Akukalia anamuswa Ebo khofi loonetsa nyenyezi moti magari anayamba kuyenderera pamphuno pake. Ebo anachita msala ndi ululu womwe ankamva komanso manyazi omwe anabwera ndi kumenyedwako moti anathamangira kunyumba kwake kukatenga chikwanje. Pa nthawiyi n’kuti anthu ambirimбири ochokera m’nyumba zoyandikira atatuluka m’makomo mwawo kuti aone zimene zikuchitika ndipo ena ankakuwa mwamantha. Nawonso anthu omwe ankadutsa m’njira anakhamukira kunyumba-ko.

Zimene zinachitika pambuyo pa zimenezi zinali ntchito za Ekwensu, chiwanda choipa kwambiri chomwe chimatha kusenda chikopa cha munthu adakali moyo. Akukalia anayamba kuthamangira Ebo mpaka kukalowa kumpanda kwa nyumba yake. Atalowa kumpandako anangolunjika kukachisi wapakhomopo n’kukatengamo *ikenga* wa Ebo. Anthu ena aja anangoti kukamwa yasa-a pamenene anaona Akukalia akuthyola *ikengayo* thyo-o ndi

bondo lake.

Ebo ndi amene anali womaliza kuona malodzawa. Iye anali akulimbana ndi Otikpo yemwe anamugwira kuti amulande chikwanje chomwe chinali m’manja mwake pofuna kumuwombola kuti asakhetse mwazi. Koma anthu oonerera aja ataona zimene Akukalia anachita, anauza Otikpo kuti amusiye. Anthu awiriwo anatulukira limodzi m’nyumba muja. Ebo anayamba kuthamangira komwe kunali Akukalia ndipo ataona zimene anachita ndi *ikenga* wake uja, anangoima nji kukamwa kuli pululu, chibwano chake chitatsala pang’ono kugunda pansi. Kwa kanthawi, iye sankadziwa ngati zimene ankaonazi zinali zenizeni kapena maloto. Kenako anatikita m’maso ndi kuseri kwa dzanja lake lamanzere. Koma ayi ndithu, maso ake anali akuona bwinobwino. Akukalia anali ataima patsogolo pake ndipo *ikenga* wake wothyoka uja anali ali pansi pamene Akukalia anamuponyera.

“Tayerekeza kusuntha pamene waimapo ngati umadzionna kuti ndiwe mwamuna. Ndiyandikire ndikuphulitse uone. E-etu ndamuthyola ndi ineyo *ikenga* wakoyu. Uchitanso mfwe-e kapena?”

Ebo anatsimikizadi kuti samalota moti anangote-mbenuka mwaulemu n’kukalowa mu *obi* wake. Pamene ankadutsa pakachisi wake uja, anaima kaye pang’ono n’kusuzumiramo kuti atsimikizire kuti *ikenga* wake mulibe. Mtima unamuwawa kwambiri ataona kuti *ikengayo* mulibedi. Anangoona katebulo komwe ankamuikapo basi. Ebo anakunga chibakera chake mwamphamvu. “Nna doh! Nna doh! Nna doh!” analira mowawidwa mtima kwinku akuitana mizimu yamakolo ake kuti ibwere kudzamuthandiza. Kenako anapitirira n’kukalowa m’chipinda chake chogona mu *obi* muja. Iye anakhalabe kuchipindako kufikira pamene Otikpo anayamba kuganiza kuti akufuna ku-

dzivulaza kapena kudzipha. Posakhalitsa anathamangira mu *obimo* kuti akaone, koma anachedwa. Ebo anatulukira mwamavuvu ngati chipembere. Iye anatuluka mu *obi* muja mfuti yotcheratchera ili m'manja mwake. Kenako anakai-ma chapakhomo ndipo anagwada atamuyang'anitsa Akukalia mfuti yosaphethirayo kwinaku atatsinzinira diso limodzi. Akukalia atangoona kuti kwaipa, anayamba kuthamangira komwe kunali Ebo kuti akamukhape ndi chikwanje. Koma asanafike pamene panali Ebo chipolopolo chinatsomphoka ndipo chinalowa m'thupi mwake mosadziletsa. Ngakhale zimenezi zinachitika, iye anapitirizabe kuthamanga dzanja lake lili m'mwamba litagwira chikwanje mwamphamvu kwambiri moti anakagunda denga la *obi* uja n'kugwera pansu chafufumimba.

Pamene thupi la Akukalia linkakafika ku Umuaro, aliye-nse anazizidwa thupi. Zinali zisanachitikepo kuti nthumwi yochokera ku Umuaro ikafere kudziko lina. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu ayambe manong'onong'o n'kumane-na kuti atsogoleri awo achita chinthu choipa kwambiri.

“Tangoganizani mmene anthu omwe anamutumawo akumvera kuona mtembo wake uli phuthi pachithatha!” anthuwo ankatero. “Ndi ndani amene chikumbumtima sichingamulize ataona kuti waphetsa munthu? Nanga munthu angapereke nsembe yamtundu wanji kuti afufute tchimo lalikulu ngati limeneli? Bwanji ngati achibale a munthu amene waphedwayu atanena kuti: *Munthu amene wachititsa zimenezi ayenera kudulidwa nthulinthuli!* Ngakhale zimenezo zitachitika sizingafafanize tchimo lime-neli.”

Zikanakhala kuti anthu a ku Umuaro anaisiya nkha-

niyi poyamba pompaja, mwina zimenezi sizikanachitika. N’kutheka kuti mzimu woipa wotchedwa Ekwensu ndi umene unkachititsa zimenezi. Koma panali chinthu chimodzi chimene chinkawasowetsabe mtendere. Inali nkhanani yaing’ono, koma pa nthawi imodzimodziyo inalinso nkhanani yaikulu. N’chifukwa chiyani anthu a ku Okperi sanatumize nthenga ku Umuaro kuti akanene zimene zinachitika kuti munthuyo aphedwe? Kusachitapo kanthu kwa anthu a ku Okperi kunathandiza anthu kku Omuaro udziwa kuti munthu amene anapha Akukalia ayenera kuti anaputidwa kwambiri. Zinalinso zooni kuti Akukalia sanali mwana wa ku Umuaro kokha. Paja mayi ake anachokera ku Okperi. Choncho zimene zinachitikazi ndi zofanana ndi zimene ena amanena kuti mutu wa tonde kugwera m’thumba la tonde. Komabe ngati panakhetsedwa mwazi, panakayenera kunenedwa zinazake, winawake ankayenera kutumizidwa kuti akanene chimene chinatsitsa dzaye. Popeza anthu a ku Okperi sanatumize aliyense, zinali zoonekeratu kuti ali ndi nkwiyo woopsa kwa anthu a ku Umuaro. Ndipo anthu sakanangokhala atazindikira zimenezi. Patangodutsa masiku anayi kuchokera pamene Akukalia anaphedwa, amithenga anazungulira ndi usiku m’midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi akumwaza uthenga wa msonkhano.

Msonkhano womwe unachitika tsiku lotsatira unali waukulu zedi. Pafupifupi aliyense amene anayankhula pamsonkanowu ananena kuti si bwino kumaimba mlandu mtembo wa Akukalia. Iwo ananena kuti madoda a Umuaro ayenera kuvomereza kuti analakwitsa kwambiri kutumiza munthuyu ku Okperi. Anthu ambiri, makamaka achikulire, ananena kuti angachite bwino kungoisiya nkhanani ya malo ija m’malo mopitirizabe kuseweretsa ndevu za anthu okwiya a ku Okperi. Koma panali ena osafuna kugonja, omwe ankachita zinthu monga mmene mkuluwiko wina

umanenera kuti, akaputidwa ankayamba kuzula tsitsi lawo n’kumalitafuna. Iwo analumbira kuti sangangotambalala n’kumaonerera Umuaro akulavuliridwa kunkhope. Anthu amenewa, monga zinakhalira ulendo wapita uja, ankatso-goleredwa ndi Nwaka. Pamsonkhanowu Nwaka anayanekhula mokopa kwambiri moti anasuntha mitima ya anthu ambiri.

Ezeulu sanayankhule mpaka kumapeto. Kenako anaimirira n’kulonjera amuna a mu Umuaro ndipo anayanekhula ndi nkhope yakugwa.

“Umuaro kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Umuaro abodonesi kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Kwezuenu!”

“Hem!”

“Abale anga, chitoliro timaimba chija chasweka. Pamene ndinkayankhula misika iwiri yapitayo pamalo omwe ano, ndinaponya mwambi. Ndinanena kuti ‘munthu wamkulu akakhala kuti alipo pakhomo, mbuzi yankota simangosiyidwa yokha kuti izivutika ndi kubereka.’ Ngati mukukumbukira ndinkayankhula ndi Ogbuefi Egonwanne yemwe anali munthu wamkulu m’nyumbayi. Ndinamuuza kuti ankayenera kuima nazo n’kutsutsa masewera tinkalinganiza aja. Koma m’malo mwake iye anaika khala lamoto m’dzanja la mwana n’kumuuza kuti alinyamule mosamala kwambiri. Ndiye tonse taona mmene mwanayo wapsera ndi khalalo. Pa nthawi imene ija sindinkayankhula ndi Egonwanne yekha. Ndinkayankhulanso ndi madoda onse a mu Umuaro, omwe ankatsata njira yakumanda, yakumsika akuiona. Anthu onsewa analipo pakhomo, koma mbuzi yankota inavutika yokha ndi kubereka.”

“Kalekalelo dziko likadali ndi mphonje, kunali ka-

tswiri wina wochita masewera okolana ndi kulikhana, yemwe nsana wake unali usanagundepo pansi. Iye ankachita masewerawa m'midzi yosiyanasiyana mpaka anagonjetsa anthu onse padziko lapansi. Kenako anaganiza zopita kudziko lamizimu ndipo anagonjetsanso mzimu uliwonse umene analimbana nawo kumeneko. Ina inali ndi mitu isanu ndi iwiri, ndipo ina inali ndi mitu khumi, koma yonseyo anaigonjetsa kotheratu. Bwenzi lake lomwe linkamuimbira chitoliro akamalimbana ndi mizimuyo, linamuuza kuti wagonjetsa mizimuyo mokwanira ndipo nthawi yoti abwerere padziko lapansi yakwana, koma iye anachita makani. Bwenzi lakeyo anayesetsa kumuchonderera koma iye anakakamira. Ankangokhala ngati makutu ake atsekeka ndi phula. M'malo mobwerera kwawo, anauza mizimu ija kuti ibweretse mzimu womwe imautama ndi mphamvu kumeneko. Mizimuyo itamva izi, inangomutumizira mulungu wake. Mulungu wakeyu, yemwe anali wowonda kwambiri, anamugwira ndi dzanja limodzi n'kumuphulitsa pomumenyetsa pamwala."

"Amuna a mu Umuaro, kodi mukuganiza kuti n'chifukwa chiyani makolo anthu ankatiuza nthano imeneyi? Ankatiuza nthanoyi pofuna kutiphunzitsa kuti, ngakhale munthu atakhala ndi mphamvu zochulukira bwanji, samayenera kuchitira mwano *chi* wake. Zimenezi ndi zimene m'bale wathu waphedwa uja anachita—anachitira mwano *chi* wake. Ife tinali anzake omuimira chitoliro koma sitinamuchonderere kuti asapitirize, moti mpaka waphulitsidwa ndi mulungu wake. Nanga lero ali kuti m'bale wathuyo? Anthutu salakwitsa akamanena kuti ntchentche yojijirika imatsatira mtembo kumanda. Koma tatiyeni timusiye kaye Akakulia apo. Iye wapita chifukwa cha kusamva kwake, mwina pochitira ulemu titi monga mmene *chi* wake anafunira."

“Koma kapolo amene waona mnzake akukwiriridwa m’dzenje losaya, ayenera kudziwa kuti nayenso akadzadutsa, anthu adzamukwirira mwanjira yomweyo. Umuaro akulimbana ndi *chi* wake. Kodi pali munthu aliyense mu Umuaro amene sadziwa Ulu, mulungu amene amapha munthu pamene moyo wake watafika pokoma kwambiri? Ndamva anthu ena akupitirizebe kunena kuti tikamenyane ndi anthu a ku Okperi. Koma kodi anthu amenewa akuganiza kuti Ulu awathandiza kumenya nkondo yachipseramtima? Ndikukukuuzani abale anga, masiku ano tiona anthu akutuluka zipwembwenene masanasana! Chilichonse chimene tikuchita chilibe kumutu kapena kumchira. Koma sikuti Ulu nayenso wasokonekera ngati mmene tachitira ifemu. Ngati mutapita kukamenya nkondo pobwezera imfa ya munthu amene anachitira mwano makolo a mayi ake, Ulu sakutsatirani kuopera kuti angadzidetse ndi nyansi zanuzo. Anthu a ku Umuaro, ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Msonkhanowu unatha ndi chisokonezo. Umuaro anagawanika pawiri. Anthu ambiri anapita pamene panali Ezeulu n’kumanena kuti ali kumbali yake. Koma pana linso ena omwe anapita kukaima pamene panali Nwaka.

Msonkhanowu utatha, Nwaka anachititsanso msonkhano wina kunyumba kwake ndipo usiku umenewo anagwirizana kuti mitu itatu kapena inayi ya anthu a ku Okperi iyenera kudulidwa pofuna kubwezera imfa ya Akakulia.

Asanayambe msonkhanowu, Nwaka anaonetsetsa kuti palibe munthu aliyense wam’mudzi mwa Ezeulu yemwe anabwera pamsonkhanowo. Iye ananyamula nyali yake n’kumaiyendetsa kuti aone nkhope za anthu onse omwe anabwera pamsonkhanowo. Pambuyo pake, anthu khumi ndi asanu anachokako chothamanga.

Nwaka anayamba ndi kunena kuti anthu a ku Umuaro sayenera kulola kuti Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu ayambe kuwalamulira. “Bambo anga sanandiuze kuti kalelo asanapite kukamenya nkondo iliyonse ankapita kaye kwa wansembe wa Ulu kuti akapemphe chilolezo,” iye anatero. “Munthu amene amanyamula mulungu si mfumu ayi. Ntchito yake ndi kuchita miyambo komanso kupereka nsembe kwa mulunguyo basi. Ineyo ndakhala ndikuonetsetsa zochita za Ezeulu kwa nthawi yaitali. Iye uja ali ndi mtima wakokerakwako komanso ali ndi nkhwiru ya udi-ndo osati pang’ono. Amaoneka kuti amafuna atakhala mfumu, wansembe komanso sing’anga. Amalakalaka zonse zitakhala zake. Koma zimenezi si zodabwitsa chifukwa anthu amati mmenemu ndi mmene bambo akenso analiri. Ndiye zangokhala monga mwambi umanenera kuti mayi mbu-u, mwana mbu-u. Komabe anthu a ku Umuaro anawaonetsa bambo a Ezeulu kuti anthu a chiIbo safuna masewera amenewo.”

“Ife sitinayambane ndi Ulu. Iye adakali mtetezi wathu, ngakhale kuti pano sitiopanso asilikali a Abam kuti abwera kudzatiukira. Koma ineyo sindingalole kuti wansembe afike podzilonga ufumu ndikuona ndi maso angawa. Bambo anga anandiuza nkhani zambirimбири, koma sanandiuze zoti Ezeulu ndi mfumu ya Umuaro. Komanso kodi iyeyo ndi ndani, buluzi wachabechabe ngati amene uja? Kodi si paja nayenso amalowa kumpanda kwake kudzera pakhomo lofanana ndi limene ena tonsefe timalowera? Ngati Umuaro atasankha kuti akhale ndi mfumu tikudziwa kale kumene mfumuyo ingachokere. Kodi ndi liti pamene mudzi wa Umuachala unasanduka waukulu pa midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi? Timadziwa kuti ndi nsanje pakati pa midzi ina imene inachititsa kuti asankhe wansembe kuchokera ku mudzi wopanda mphamvu. Ife time-

nyera nkhondo malo athu komanso tithana ndi Okperi chifukwa cha mwano umene atichitira. Tiyeni tisalole kuti wina atilefule ndi dzina la Ulu. Pajatu munthu akanena kuti inde, *chi* wakenso amanena kuti inde. Ndipo tisanamizane azibambo muli apa, ngakhale Ulu sitingamunyengerere atakhala kuti wayamba kuchita zabwatabwataphulu-u! Tonse tikukumbukira bwinobwino zimene anthu a mtundu wa Aninta anachita mulungu wawo atawagwiritsa fuwa lamoto. Si paja anamutenga n’kupita naye kumalire a dziko lawo n’kukamuyatsa moto kumeneko? Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Nkhondoyo inamenyedwa kuchokera pa tsiku la *Afo* n’kudzafikanso pa tsiku lina la *Afo*. Pa tsiku limene nkondoyo inawulika, amuna a Umuaro anapha asilikali awiri a Okperi. Tsiku lotsatira linali la *Nkwo*, choncho nkondoyo inaima kaye kuti anthu apite kumsika. Pa masiku otsatira, tsiku la Eke ndi tsiku la Oye, nkondoyo inafika poipa kwambiri. Asilikali a Umuaro anapha anthu anayi ndipo asilikali a Okperi anapha asilikali atatu a Umuaro, ndipo m’modzi mwa anthu atatuwo anali mchimwene wake wa Akukalia, dzina lake Okoye. Tsiku lotsatira, lomwe linali la *Afo*, nkondoyo inatha mwadzidzidzi. Mzungu uja, Wintabota, anabwera ndi asilikali ake n’kuthetsa nkondoyo. Nkhani ya zimene asilikali a mzunguyu anachita ku Abame inali idakachititsa mantha anthu ambiri. Choncho asilikali a ku Umuaro sanalimbane ndi mzunguyo ndipo anangoganiza zoika zida pansi. Ngakhale kuti anali asanakhutire, iwo ankaona kuti achita zomwe akanatha pobwezera imfa ya Akukalia. Iwo ankaona kuti amupatsa Akukalia mitsamiro yabwino itatu. Komabe, kufa kwa Akukalia ndi

mchimwene wake pa mkangano umodzi chinali chizindikiro choti mzimu woipa wa Ekwensu unali utalowerapo.

Mzungu uja sanakhutire ndi kungothetsa nkhondoyo. Iye anasonkhanitsa mifuti yonse ya anthu a ku Umuaro ndipo analamula asilikali kuti aiwononge anthu onse akuna, kupatulapo mifuti itatu kapena inayi yomwe anaite nga n'kumapita nayo kwawo. Kenako anakhala pansi ndi anthu a ku Umuaro komanso Okperi. Pambuyo pokambirana nkhaniiyi, malo aja anaperekedwa ku Okperi.

3

Kaputeni T. K. Winterbottom anaima pakhonde la nyumba yake n'kumaonerera kukhuthuka kwa chizimalupsa. Kwa mwezi umodzi kapena iwiri yapitayo, dzuwa linkawomba molapitsa moti kunja kunangoti bu-u. Udzu wonse unali utapserera ndi kutentha ndipo mitengo komanso masamba ake zinali zitathimbirira ndi fumbi. Nyengo inkakhalako bwino kwa maola awiri m'mawa ndipo kenako kunja kunkasinthana n'kuyamba kulavula moto woopsa ngati ng'anjo. Kutenthaku kunkachititsa kuti Winterbottom azingotuluka mitsinje ya thukuta m'mutu komanso m'khosi mwake. Chinthu chimene chinkamunyansa kwambiri chinali thukuta lomwe linkayenderera kuseri kwa khutu lake n'kumamveka ngati nyerere. Kutenthako kunkakamukako chakumadzulo dzuwa likamakalowa ndipo kunja kunkawomba kamphepo kayeziyezi komwe kankamutsitsimula kwambiri. Koma kampheko kameneka kanali koopsa kwa azungu omwe ankakhala ku Africa chifukwa kankawachititsa kuti avule zovala ndipo udzudzu unkapezerapo mwayi n'kuwapsopsona ndi mlomo wautali wa imfa.

Kaputeni Winterbottom sanagonepo tulo tabwino kungochokera pamene mphepo yozizira ya *harmattan* inasiya kuwomba m'mwezi wa Disembala. Tsopano munali mkatikati mwa Febuluwale. Winterbottom anali akungooneka ngati munthu wodwalala matenda a kaliwondewonde. Khungu lake linayera kwambiri ndipo ankango-

khala ngati chiwanda chifukwa cha kuyoyoka kwa thupi lake. Ngakhale kunja kunkatentha kwambiri, Winterbottom ankamva kuzizira kosaneneka kumapazi ake. Malinga ndi mmene ankamvera kutentha kumtunda kwa thupi lake, Winterbottom akanakonda akanamasamba madzi ozizira. Koma ankadziwa kuti kuchita zimenezo ndi chibwana chopisa kuuna wa njoka ndi zala. Choncho nthawi zonse ankasamba madzi otentha kuti akhalebe ndi moyo. Nyengo ya ku Africa sinkafuna mzungu wochuluka nzeru yemwe amangochita zofuna zake. Azungu otere sankagonera ndipo ankausiya mpunga ukadakoma.

M'mawa uliwonse akangotuluka kubafa, Winterbottom ankadziyang'anira pagalasi n'kuona nkhamu zake zomwe zinkangoyererayerabe chifukwa cha kutha kwa magazi. Ichi chinali chizindikiro choti malungo ali pafupi kumukanthanso. Moyo wa ku Africa unali wovuta zedi chifukwa kuwonjezera pa kutentha kwa masana kuja, usiku ankavutika kwambiri kuti apeze tulo. Kutu udzudzu usamulume, ankadzitsekera m'ndende ya masikito womwe ankatsekeratu njira zonse zodutsa mpweya, n'kumamupangitsa kuti azikhala ngati ali m'bokosi la maliro. Zovala zake zapogona zinkanyoweratu lephethe ndipo pilo wake ankachita kufufuma chifukwa chokhuta ndi thukuta. Zimenezi zinkachititsa kuti azisowa mtendere moti ankangodzitembenuzatembenuza mpaka pakati pa usiku. Kenako ankayamba kumva kulira kwa ng'oma chapatali kwambiri. Winterbottom ankadabwa kuti ndi anthu amtundu wanji amene ankachita miyambo yawo pakati pa usiku m'dziko lowirira ngati limenelo. Chimene chinkamumitsa mutu n'choti malo onse amene anakhalapo m'dziko la Nigeria, ankamva kulira kumeneku pakati pa usiku. Zikuoneka kuti anthu ena mkatikati mwa usikuwo ankakhala ndi zochitika zawo zachinsinsi ndipo ng'oma zo-

mwe ankaimbazo zinkang'amba mdima wochindikala ngati gombeza womwe unkanjoti bo-o usiku. Kodi mwina kulirako kunkachokera m'mutu wake womwe unkachita kusuwa chifukwa chowambidwa ndi dzuwa lowirima?

N'kutheka kuti zaka khumi ndi zisanu zapitazo, Winterbottom ankavutika maganizo akaganizira za nyengo komanso chakudya chomwe azidzadya pamene ankauzidwa kuti azidzagwira ntchito m'dziko la Nigeria. Koma tsopano anali atapima ndi moyo umenewu. Ngakhale kuti nyengo yotentha inkamunyansa komanso inkachititsa kuti thupi lake likhale lofooka, iye sakanalola kubwereranso ku Ulaya. Chidwi chake chogwira ntchito m'malo mwa dziko la Britain ku Africa chinalimba pamene ankamenya nkondo ku Cameroon mu 1916. Pa nthawiyo ankamenyana ndi asilikali a dziko la German. Kumeneko n'kumene anapeza dzina lake laulemu lakuti Kaputeni. Mosiyana ndi azungu ambiri omwe anamenya nawo nkondo ku Cameroon, ndi Winterbottom yekha amene anapitiriza kudziwikabe kuti Kaputeni mpaka pamene analowa m'nyengo ya mtendere.

Ngakhale kuti chizimalupsa chinachedwa, pamene chinkabwera chinafika modzidzimutsa kwambiri. Monga mwa nthawi zonse, patsikuli dzuwa linalavula ukali wake wonse ndipo dziko lonse linabukiratu. Mbalame zomwe zinkalira chakum'mawa zinali zitatsekedwa pakamwa ndi kuwotcha kwa dzuwa. Nyonso mphepo inkangokhala ngati kulibe ndipo mitengo inangoti du-u. Koma mwadzidzidzi kunja kunatembenuka. Mphepo inayamba kuwomba mwamphamvu moti kumwamba kunaderatu. Posakhalitsa masamba komanso fumbi zinayamba kunyamulidwa ndi akavuluvulu omwe ankadutsa m'makomo akusesa zinyalala. Mitengo ya gwalangwa komanso ya kanjenda inayamba kuvinavina ndi mphepoyo ndipo masamba

ake ankangoti petupetu ngati tsitsi la chiphona chomwe chikuthawa chimphepo choopsa.

Wantchito wa Winterbottom, dzina lake John, anathamanga kukatseka zitseko komanso mazenera ndipo kenako anayamba kutolera mapepala ndi zithunzi zomwe zinkauluka ndi mphepoyo. Mphepo imeneyi inangokhala ngati kalambulabwalo wa mvula yomwe inatsika pambuyo pake. Pa nthawiyi kunamveka kung'amba koopsa kwa chiphaliwali ndipo chitangowomba, kunja konse kunali chinam'balala. Dziko lomwe linagona tulo kwa miyezi yambiri linali litatsitsimuka ndipo kafungo kadothi kanangoti pha-a, chizindikiro choti msipu uphukanso n'kubiriwiritsa dziko. Winterbottom, anali adakali pakhonde paja, ndipo nyengoyi inasinthiratu moyo wake. Iye analolera kuwombedwa kumaso ndi fumbi lamphepo ija ndipo nthawi imeneyi anayamba kuchitira nsanje ana a antchito omwe ankadumphadumphapabwalo michombo ili pamtunda, kwinaku akuimbira mvula inkabwerayo.

“Kodi anawo akuti chiyani?” Winterbottom anamufunsa John, yemwe tsopano anali atanyamula mpando m'manja mwake.

“Akuimba moitana mvula kuti ibwere mwachangu-changu,” anatero John m'chingerezi chokhobokakhoboka.

Ana anayi anathamanga kuchokera kunyumba za antchito n'kumakaimba limodzi ndi ana anali pabwalo la nyumba ya Winterbottom aja. Pamalowa panali kapinga ndipo amenewa anali malo okhawo otakasuka amene anawo akanachitira zimenezi.

“Kodi John, ana onsewa ndi ako?” Winterbottom anayankhula mawu amenewa mokhala ngati akumuchitira nsanje.

“Ayi, sala,” anatero John akuika pansi mpando uja kuti Winterbottom akhalire. Kenako anayamba kuloza ana

aja. “Anga ndi awiri okha, woyamba ndi uyo akutha-mangayo ndipo wachiwiri ndi kamtsikana koyerako. Ena awiriwo ndi a khukhi. Pomwe wamkuluyo ndi wa gala-deniboyi.”

Anawo ankafunika kukuwa zenizeni kuti mawu awo amveke. Kumwamba konse kunali kutakunga mitambo yokhuta ndi mvula, kupatulapo chakutali komwe kunkaonekabe kuwala kwa dzuwa. Kenako ziphaliwali zingapo zinakalipa molumikizana ndipo pambuyo pake panali bata lodabwitsa. Pamene mvulayo inkayamba kugwa, inkagwa ndi madontho akuludzikulu ngati miyala. Ana aja analimbikira kuimba ndipo matalala anayamba kawakong’ontha m’mitu. Ngakhale kuti ankapweteka akawagwera, anawa ankangoseka ndipo anangoti balalabalala kumatola matalalawo n’kumawaponyera mkamwa asanasungunuke.

Mvulayo inagwa kwa pafupifupi ola lathunthu ndipo inasiya kamodzin’kamodzi ngati aikhapa ndi chikwanje. Mitengo ija inali itatsukika n’kumaoneka yobiriwira ndipo masamba anatambasula mosangalala ndi umoyo. Winterbottom anayang’ana wotchi yake ndipo anaona kuti inali itangotsala pang’ono kukwana 6 koloko. Chifukwa cha kutengeka ndi mvula ija, iye anali ataiwala kumwa tiyi komanso kudya bisiketi wake yemwe John anamubweretsera isanakwane 5 koloko. Ndiye pofuna kudzipatsako chochita, anatola bisiketi m’modzi n’kuyamba kumuje-gweda. Pa nthawiye m’pamene anakumbukira kuti Clarke, yemwe anali atangofika kumene kuderali, abwera kwa-woko kudzadya mgonero. Kenako ananyamuka n’kulowera kukhitchini kuti akaone kuti zikuyenda bwanji.

Siteshoni ya ku Okperi sinali yaikulu kwambiri. Pasiteshoniye panali azungu asanu okha. Azungu ake anali Kaputeni Winterbottom, Clarke, Roberts, Wade komanso

Wright. Kaputeni Winterbottom ndi amene anali wo-
 ng'anira chigawocho ndipo ankatchedwa D.C. Mbendera
 yomwe inali petupetu pamwamba pa ofesi yake chinali
 chizindikiro choti ankaimira boma la azungu m'chigawo
 chimenecho. Iye ankachitira mbenderayo sawatcha pa
 tsiku la Empire Day, pomwe ana asukulu onse am'deralo
 ankachita pelete n'kumadutsa pamaofesiwo. Pa nthawi
 imeneyi komanso nthawi zina zapadera, Winterbottom
 ankavala yunifomu yake yoyera komanso kunyamula
 lupanga lake la ulemu.

Clarke anatomizidwa kuderali kuti adzakhale wo-
 thandizira wa Winterbottom. Iye anali atangotha masabata
 anayi okha pasiteshoniye ndipo anabwera kudzalowa
 m'malo mwa John Macmillan, yemwe anamwalira ata-
 dwala malungo aakulu.

Azungu ena omwe anali pasiteshoniye sankagwira
 ntchito zoyendetsa boma. Mwachitsanzo, Roberts anali
 wachiwiri kwa mkulu wa apolisi. Wade ankayang'anira
 ndende ndipo Wright ankayang'anira ntchito zachitukuko
 monga ntchito yolima nsewu wopita ku Umuaro. Kaputeni
 Winterbottom anali atamuyankhulapo mwamphamvu
 Wright chifukwa cha khalidwe lake, makamaka pa nkhani
 ya zimene ankachita ndi azimayi am'midzi.

"N'zofunika kwambiri," anamuuza choncho mnza-
 keyo, "kuti azungu omwe abwera ku Nigeria, makamaka
 amene amagwira ntchito mkatikati mwa Okperi, asama-
 dzinyazitse pakati pa anthu am'mudzi." Pa nthawi ime-
 neyo D.C. ankangokhala ngati lidala wam'kalasi ndipo
 Kaputeni Winterbottom anali atatsimikiza mtima kupere-
 ka chibalo kwa azungu ochita zosalongosoka omwe anka-
 gwira ntchito m'chigawo chake.

Iye atamanga mfundo yakuti ngati Wright sasintha
 amukhaulitsa pomuchotsa m'kalabu yawo. Kalabuyi inali

pamalo ena omwe poyamba pankakhala asilikali ndipo asilikaliwo anasamukapo pamene ntchito yawo inatha m'derali. Inali nyumba yaing'ono yamatabwa yokhala ndi khonde komanso zipinda ziwiri. Chipinda chimodzi chinthagwira ntchito ngati bala ya zakumwa ndipo chinacho chinali chosungiramo mabuku komanso nyuzipepala. Mamembala a kalabuyo ankatha kubwereka mabuku kapena kuwerenga nyuzipepala zomwe zinatuluka m'dziko lakwawo miyezi iwiri kapena itatu ya m'mbuyomo. Ankathanso kulemba matelegalamu opita kudziko lakwawo ndipo ankaloledwa kutumiza uthenga wa mawu khumi kawiri pamlungu.

Tony Clarke anavala zovala zake zomwe ankazidalira ndipo anachita zimenezi kukadali ola lathunthu kuti anyamuke. Kuphophola suti kunja kukutentha chinali chilango chachikulu kwa iye. Koma anauzidwa ndi anzake omwe anawapeza kumeneku kuti si zovuta kusiya kuvala modzilemekeza m'nyengo ya ku Africa. Anzakewo anamunong'oneza kuti kuvala suti ndi mankhwala omwe mzungu aliyense ayenera kuonetsetsa kuti akuyenda nawo ngati akufuna kumaonekabe wolemekezeka m'dziko la anthu ochita zinthu mosokonekeralo. Tsikuli linali bwinko chifukwa mvula ija inachititsa kuti kunja kuzizire ndipo izi zinathandiza kuti asaphikike ndi kutentha. Komabe kwa masiku ena, Clarke sankadya chakudya powopa kuti malaya komanso taye yake ithimbirira ndi thukuta lomwe linkatuluka ngati kasupe akangomaliza kudya. Popeza anali atamaliza kukonzeka, anakhala kaye pansi n'kuyamba kuwerenga mutu womaliza wa buku lakuti *Kulunzanitsa Mitundu Yotsalira ya Kumunsi kwa Mtsinje wa*

Niger lomwe linalembedwa ndi George Allen. Bukuli analibwereka kwa Kaputeni Winterbottom. Iye ankati akawerenga pang’ono ankayang’ana wotchi yake. Wotchiri inali mphatso yomwe bambo ake anamupatsa pamene ankabwera ku Nigeria kudzagwira ntchito zaboma, kapena kuti “pamene ankayankha chiitano” ngati mmene George Allen ananenera m’buku lake. Iye anawerenga bukuli pafupifupi kwa milungu iwiri ndipo ankayenera kulimaliza kuti akalibweze madzulowa. Zikuoneka kuti kutentha n’kumene kunkamuchititsa kuti aziwerenga paliwiro lochepa chifukwa nthawi zambiri akamawerenga ankangopezeka kuti wayamba kuwodza mwinanso kuzimiratu kumene.

Chinanso chomwe chinachititsa zimenezi chinali choti zigawo zoyambirira za bukulo sizinali zosangalatsa kwenikweni. Koma tsopano ndime zomalizira za chigawo chomaliza cha bukulo zinali zozuna chifukwa zinkafoto-koza mmene angerezi angachitire zinthu kuti achotse umbuli m’mitu mwa anthu osaphunzira a ku Africa. Mutu wa chigawo chimene ankawerengacho unali wakuti *Chii-tano* ndipo unakamba za angerezi omwe anabwera kudzagwira ntchito ku Nigeria.

Kwa azungu omwe ankafuna kumagwira ntchito yawofuwofu komanso yosavuta, dziko lake silinali la Nigeria. Ndipo kunena mosapsatira mawu, zinali zosatheka kuti dzikoli likhale malo abwino oti mzungu azigwirirako ntchito chifukwa nthaka yake inali yoguga komanso anthu ake anali auve ngati abakha. Komabe, azungu omwe ankabwerera ntchito ankachita zambiri. Kawirikawiri anthu amenewa ankakhala okakala mitima ndipo ankaona anthu am’midzi ngati katundu osati anthu. Ankati akaona mwayi sankausekerera ngakhale pang’ono. Ankatha kupotokola zochitika, kusintha tsogolo la zinthu komanso kudutsa

nyengo zonse. Ngakhale ankhalakale omwe anakwera kale pansana pa njovu ya Nigeria, ankafunika kugwiritsitsa kuti asagwepo. Iwo ankalakalaka ku Africa kutakhala ngati ku India komwe ulamuliro wa azungu unakhazikitsa malamulo abwino, kupanga mapulani otukula dziko komanso kubwezeretsa chonde munthaka yokanika kuti iyambenso kubereka zipatso. Clark ankaona kuti azungu ndi anthu apaderadera omwe amatha kupanga njira pamalo omwe panalibe. Mumtima mwake ankati, “Azimayi athu sati-bweza m’mbuyo kuti tizikaseweretsanso matope komanso zidole. Ife timanyadira kuti samachita zimenezi—ngakhale kuti n’zoliritsa—koma amatitumiza kuchire kuno kuti tidzatsogolere mitundu ya anthu opanda mitu omwe amachita zinthu mobwerera m’mbuyo, n’kuwathandiza kuti achoke manthongo n’kuyamba kuchita zinthu molo-ngosoka.”

“Kunena zoona anthu amene tingachite zimenezi ndi ifeyo! Angelezi adzakhalabe pamalo awo, magazi awo sanama. Munthu amabereka mwana ndipo mwanayo amachita zinthu mwamphamvu ngati makolo ake. Amatha kusintha nyengo, kusuntha mapiri, kudutsa m’mikwingwiri ma komanso kusewera mwaukatswiri masewera a moyo.”

Maganizo amenewa ali m’mutu, Clarke anayang’ananso wotchi yake ija. Nyumba ya Kaputeni Winterbottom inali pafupi kwambiri moti akanatha kuyenda mphindi ziwiri zokha. Choncho anaona kuti adikirebe chifukwa m’mbuyomo anachimina atalawira kumalo ena omwe anaitanidwa kuti akadye chakudya. Asanabwere ku Okperi, Clarke anakhala kwa miyezi iwiri kulikulu lawo n’kumadikirira kuti amuze kopita. Ndiye ali kumeneko, tsiku lina anaitanidwa kuti akadye chakudya ndi Lieutenant Governor. Pa chifukwa chosadziwika bwino Clarke ankaganiza kuti nthawi yoyamba kudya chakudyocho ndi 8

koloko moti anakafika kunyumbako 8 koloko ndendende. Chomwe chinamudabwitsa n'choti sanapezeka munthu aliyense. Kenako anaganiza zopita kukawongolako miyendo kuti abwerenso nthawi ina, koma m'modzi mwa olamdira alendo anamuona n'kumupatsa chakumwa komanso malo oti akhale. Iye anakhala pampando momangika kwammbiri tambula ya m'manja. Ankaona kuti akanachita bwino akanachoka n'kupita kumakadikirira pamalo ena mpaka alendo atayamba kubwera. Posakhalitsa munthu wina anatsika masitepe kwinaku akuimba muluzi mwaphokoso. Clarke anaimirira popereka ulemu wake kwa munthuyo. Anali Lieutenant Governor yemwe anaima chapatali akumuyang'ana monyansidwa, komabe anabwera kudzakupatsa moni. Clarke anazidziwikitsa ndipo anayamba kupepesa chifukwa chobwera mofulumira kwambiri.

“Ndimaganiza kuti ndafika pa nthawi yake koma zikuoneka kuti ndalawira kwambiri.” Pamenepo munthu wina, yemwe anali wapolisi, anafika ndipo ataona mlendo yomwe anamuyang'ana modandaula. Munthuyo anayamba ku gwedeza wotchi yake n'kumaimvetsera ikuyenda.

“Takulandira John, uyu ndi Clarke ndipo wabwera mofulumira kwambiri. Amaona ngati tim'mana.” Kenako Lieutenant Governor anachoka n'kupita kukakwera m'chipinda cham'mwamba. Pa nthawi yonse yomwe ankadya chakudya chamadzulowo, sanayankhulenso ndi Clarke. Posakhalitsa alendo ena anayambanso kutulukira. Koma onsewo anali anthu a mipando yonona okhaokha ndipo sanalabade za Clarke wosanunkha kanthuyo.

Awiri mwa alendowo anabwera ndi akazi awo. Koma ena onse kuphatikizapo Lieutenant Governor uja, aye-nera anali osakwatira kapena anachita zinthu mwanzeru posiya akazi awo ku Mangalande.

Nthawi yovuta kwambiri kwa Clarke inali pamene

Lieutenant Governor ankatsogolera alendo ake kuchipinda chodyera ndipo atalowa m'chipindacho, zinapezeka kuti mpando wa Clarke palibe. Choncho anangoti khuma n'ku-ima penapake ndipo palibe amene anazindikira kuti alibe malo. Lieutenant Governor uja atangokhala pansi, alendo ena aja anakhalanso pansi. Kwa Clarke nthawi imene anakhala m'chipinda chodyeracho inamutalikira kwambiri. Mwamwayi munthu wina anamuona ndipo anatumiza m'modzi mwa olandira alendo kuti akamutengere mpando. Koma kenako munthuyo anasintha manganizo, chifu-kwa iyeyo ndi amene anaimirira n'kuuza Clarke kuti akhalepo.

Kaputeni Winterbottom anali akupyontha mowa wake pamene Tony Clarke ankatulukira.

“Bolakotu lero nyengo ili bwino, Mulungu aleme-kezeke ndithu.”

“Indedi, mvula ya chizimalupsa inachedwa chaka chino,” anatero Kaputeni Winterbottom.

“Ndinali ndisanaonepo mmene mvula imakhuthu-kira m'chigawo chino. Koma yachita bwino kugwa, mwina nyengoyi n'kusintha.”

“Ayi usathamangire kusangalala, kungozizira tima-siku tingapo n'kuyambiranso kutentha. Kunotu nyengo yozizira simayamba mwachangu mpaka m'mwezi wa Meyi kapena Juni. Kalibu mpando uwo. Wamaliza kuwe-renga bukuli?”

“Inde, ndathokoza kwambiri kuti munandibwereka. Ndi labwino ndithu. Zikuoneka kuti Allen analemba buku-li mogwirizana ndi mmene amaonera zinthu. Wokonda kuweruza anganene kuti buku lakeli ndi lozizira pa-

ng'ono.”

Wantchito wina wa Kaputeni Winterbottom, dzina lake Boniface, anatulukira atanyamula mbale m'manja mwake.

“Mufuna chakumwa chanji?”

“Kayatu.”

“Bwanji mulawe mowa uwu?”

“Ndi mowa wanji umenewo?”

“Ndi Brandy.”

“Chabwino, ndiulaweko umenewo.” Kwa ulendo woyamba, Clarke anayang'ana mnyamata uja atavala yunifomu yoyera yomwe inali yothimbirira. Koma anachita chidwi kwambiri ndi maonekedwe a mnyamatayo. Kaputeni Winterbottom anangokhala ngati waona maganizo ake chifukwa anangolasa zimene Clarke ankafuna kuyankhula.

“Mnyamatayu ndi wooneka bwino kwambiri. Aka-nakhala mtsikana tikanati ndi wokongola momenyanitsa amuna. Wakhala akundigwirira ntchito kwa zaka zinayi. Pamene ankabwera kuno anali wamng'ono kwambiri, mwina zaka khumi ndi zitatu. Pa nthawiyo anali wachimzimidzi kwambiri. Nditamufunsa kuti ali ndi zaka zingati anandiuza kuti sakudziwa kuti anabadwa liti. Anthu a kunotu za zakazi sazitsata kwenikweni.”

“Mwandipindatu pamenepo. Mukutanthauza chiyanini mukati za zakazi sazitsata kwenikweni . . .”

“Iwo amangodziwa za nyengo basi. Ngati utamufunsa munthu kuti ali ndi zaka zingati, amangokuyang'ana ngati ukuyankhula Chipwitikizi.” Kenako mnyamata uja anabweranso ndi chakumwa china.

“Zikomo kwambiri,” anatero Clarke pamene ankalandira mowawo.

“Zikomo sala.”

Tizilombo tambirimbi touluka tinayamba kuso-nkhana panyali yomwe inaikidwa pakona chapatali. Kenako tinayamba kuthothoka mapiko n’kumayendayenda pansi. Clarke anayamba kuyang’ana tizilomboto mwachidwi kwambiri, ndipo kenako anafunsa Winterbottom ngati timaluma.”

“Ayi sitiluma, si toopsa ayi. Tizilombo timeneti timatuluka mvula ikangogwa.”

Tizilomboto tinali ngumbi ndipo zinkayenda ziwiriziwiri mondondoza.

“Ndachita chidwi ndi zimene wanena zokhudza Allen. Zoti analemba nkhanu yozizira, ndikukhulupirira kuti unatero, si choncho?”

“Ineyo ndikuona choncho. Iye sananene chilichonse chabwino chokhudza mitundu ya anthu a kuno. Sindikukayikira kuti nayenso anali m’mishonale.”

“Ndayamba kuona kuti nawenso umaganiza bwino. Ukakhala kuno kwa nthawi yaitali ngati Allen n’kuyamba kumvetsa zochita za anthu akuda, uphunzira zambiri. Koma tsiku lina ukadzaona munthu wamoyo atamukwirira mpaka m’khosi kwinaku atamuika chilazi chowotcha pamutu kuti chiitane zilombo zoti zidzamudye, m’pamene udzasinthe maganizo. Ineyo ndinaonapo zangati zimenezi. Angelezi timangokhala ndi chidwi ndi zinthu koma vuto ndi lakuti tikamachita zithuzo sitiikirapo mtima. Taonani zimene anzathu Afalansa akuchita. Iwo sachita manyazi kuphunzitsa chikhalidwe chawo anthu otsalira omwe akuwalamulira. Amaona zinthu mosiyana kwambiri ndi ife ngakhale pa nkhanu ya olamulira achikuda. Iwo anauza wolamulira wina kuti: ‘Malowa anakhala anu chifukwa munachita kulanda kwa anthu ena. Mofanana ndi zimenezi, ifeyo takulandani malowa ndipo ndi athu tsopano! Ngati simukukhutira ndi zimenezi bwerani timenyane.’

Anzathu ogangalamawa amatero. Koma angelezife timachita kunyambita anthu mapazi. Tikafuna kuchita zinthu timangozungulirazungulira kuchokera kumalire a dziko n'kukafika kumapeto mwaulemu. Timalonjeza kuti tiziteze olamulira ankhanza a masavejiwa kuti akhalebe pampando—mwinatso tisati pamipando koma pazikopa zonyansa za nyama. Sitimangolekera pomwepo, koma timapita n'kumakaika mafumu m'madera omwe kulibeko kuti tizilamulira anthu kudzero mwa mafumuwo. Akumalikulu a kwathuku amandikwana kwabasi. Amatiuza kuti tizichita zinthu zobwerera m'mbuyo zenizeni.” Kenako anagugudiza mowa umene unatsala m'tambula yake ndipo anakuwira Boniface kuti amubweretsere wina. “Sindikanadandaula kwambiri kaganizidwe kameneka kakanatsala ku Lagos, koma ndikamaona achinyamata omwe angoyamba kumene ali ndi maganizo amenewa zimandikhudza kwabasi. Munthu akakhala kuti amaona zinthu moyenera, anthu amenewa amati munthuyo ndi wovutitsa komanso wosokoneza.”

Clarke anavomereza kuti anayankhula mosazindikira ndipo ananena kuti ndi wokonzeka kulandira malangizo omwe angamuthandize kuti azichita zinthu moyenera.

“Boniface!”

“Ndikubwera sala.”

“Bweretsa mowa wina wa Clarke.”

“Ayi basi, ndikuganiza kuti ndakwana . . .”

“Ayi osamayerekedwa. Tili ndi ola lathunthu kuti chakudya chibwere patebulo, sanamalizetu kuphika! Ukhoza kulawako wamtundu wina ngati ukufuna. Bwanji Whisky?” Clarke ananena kuti amwanso Brandy yemwe uja ndipo anachita zimenezi monyinyirika kwambiri.

“Komatu ndiye muli ndi mfuti zochititsa chidwi.”

Clarke ankafunitsitsa nkhani imene ankakambirana ija itasintha. Kenako mwamwayi anaona mifuti yooneka mochititsa chidwi yomwe Winterbottom anaikoleka pafupi ndi zenera la chipinda chochezeracho.

“Kodi imeneyi ndi mifuti yomwe anthu am’mu-dzimu amapanga?” iye anakwanitsa kusinthadi nkhani ija. Nayenso Kaputeni Winterbottom anatengeka ndi mphepo ya nkhani yatsopanoyi.

“Mifuti imeneyo imandikumbutsa zambiri. Anthu a ku Okperi kuno ndi a ku Umuaro, samwerana madzi. Zimenezi zinayambika ine ndisanabwere kuno. Posachedwapa nkondo inaulika pakati pawo chifukwa cha nkhani ya malo. Nkhaniyi inaipa kwambiri chifukwa anthu a ku Okperi analandira amishonale komanso boma lathu, pomwe a ku Umuaro amachitabe zinthu zotsalira. Mwina ndi zaka zinayi kapena zisanu zapitazo pamene anthu anayesa kuchita chitukuko kumeneko. Ndinganene modzichepetsa kuti kusintha kumeneko kunabwera nditawauza kuti abweretse mifuti yawo yonse n’kuiwononga iwo akuona, kupatulapo imene ndinabwera nayo kunoyi. Posachedwapa ukafika kumeneko kuti ukaoneko. Ukadzamva wina akunena kuti Otiji-Egbe, udzadziwe kuti akunena za ine. Mawu akuti Otiji-Egbe amatanthauza *Wowononga Mifuti*. Ndimamvanso kuti ana onse omwe anabadwa chaka chimenecho amawanena kuti anabadwa m’nthawi ya *Wowononga Mifuti*.”

“Koma ndiye ndi zochititsa chidwitu. Kodi mudzi wa Umuarowo uli kutali kwambiri?” Pofika tsopano, Clarke anali atazindikira kuti akamadzionetsa kuti ndi wozindikira sizimuyendera bwino, choncho anangodziphetsa ngati kamwana n’kumangofunsa mafunso.

“Ayi, ndi mamayilosu asanu ndi imodzi okha. Koma kwa anthu a kuno, kuyenda mtunda umenewo n’chimo-

dzimodzi kunena kuti wapita kudziko lakutali kwambiri. Mosiyana ndi mitundu ina yochita zinthu mochangamuka kumpoto kwa Nigeria, komanso mitundu ina Western Nigeria, anthu a chiIgbo okha ndi amene alibe mafumu. Zimenezo ndi zimene akumalikulu anthu sakufuna. Iwo akufuna mafumu kuti boma lathu lizilamulira anthu akuda kudzera mwa mafumuwo.”

“Owo-o, pamenepatu ndiye mwanditsecula m’maso.”

“Nkhondo ya Umuaro ndi Okperi ndanena ija inayamba modabwitsa kwambiri. Ndinafufuza nkhanayi mosamala . . . Boniface! Zili bwino a Clarke? Zili bwino? Muyenera kumamwa mowa wambiri, zimathandiza kuti usamadwaledwale malungo . . . Monga ndanenera, nkho-ndoyo inayamba chifukwa choti munthu wina wa ku Umuaro limodzi ndi anzake ena anabwera ku Okperi. Zikuoneka kuti munthuyo anali atamwa mtsuko umodzi kapena iwiri ya mowa—n’zoopsa kwambiri ukaganizira kuchuluka kwa mowa umene anthu amenewa amatsa-nulira kukhosi kwawo—ndiye munthu ameneyo yemwe anali atapapira mowa chonchi, anapita m’kachisi wa mnzake n’kukatengamo *ikenga* n’kumuthyola pakati. Ndinganene kuti *ikenga* ndi chiboliboli chofunika kwambiri kwa anthu a mtundu wa Igbo chifukwa ndi chizi-ndikiro cha mphamvu zimene mwamuna aliyense amakhala nazo. Chibolibolichi chimaimiranso mizimu ya makolo yomwe amayenera kuipatsa nsembe tsiku ndi tsiku. Munthuyo akamwalira, *ikenga* wake uja amathyoledwa pakati. Mbali imodzi amaikwilira limodzi ndi mtembo wake pomwe inayo amaitaya. Ndiye ukhoza kuona mlandu umene munthu wochokera ku Umuaroyo anapalamula pothyola *ikenga* wa mnzake. Kuchita zimenezi unali mwano waukulu kwambiri. Zinali ngati akuderera mizimu ya ma-

kolo ake omwe anamwalira kalekale.”

“Zimenezi zitachitika mwini *ikengayo* anapsa mti-
ma kwambiri moti anakatenga mfuti n’kumuwombera.
Pamenepo m’pamene nkondo ya midzi iwiri inaya-
mbira ndipo inatha ine nditalowerapo. Kenako ndinaya-
mba kufufuza kuti ndidziwe mwini weniweni wa malo
amakanganiranawo ndipo ndinapeza kuti malowo ndi a ku
Okperi. Ndingakuuze pano kuti munthu aliyense amene
anabwera kudzapereka umboni pa nkhaniyi—kuchokera
kumbali zonse ziwiri—amanena zinthu zabodza zokhazo-
kha. Chinthu chimodzi chimene uyenera kumakumbukira
nthawi zonse ukamachita zinthu ndi anthu amenewa
n’choti ndi anthu abodza osati masewera. Sikuti amango-
nama kuti asakumane ndi mavuto, komanso amatha kuje-
rekeza nkhani ndi mabodza osowa nawo kolowera n’cho-
linga choti akome basi. Ndi munthu m’modzi yekha—
munthu wina wachifundo yemwe akuoneka kuti ndi wa-
nsembe wamkulu ku Umuaro—amene ananena zoono.
Munthuyu anayankhula mosonyeza kuti sakugwirizana
ndi zimene anthu a mtundu wake anachita. Sindinapezebe
kutikuti ndi chiyani, koma ineyo ndikuona kuti ali ndi
chiwanda chinachake chimene chimagwira ntchito mwa
iye. Izi zili apo, ndi munthu wochititsa chidwi ndithu.
Amaoneka mosiyana kwambiri ndi anthu akuno. Ndi
woyera, mwina tinene kuti wooneka mwakatondokatondo
ee. Masiku ano anthu ngati amenewa akumapezekapezeka
pakati pa anthu amtundu wa Igbo. Ndikuganiza kuti
m’mbuyomo anthu amtunduwu anakwatirana ndi anthu
ena oyera khungu kapena amwenye a ku India, chifukwatu
kunena zoono ena onse ndi akuda ngati midzodzo.”

Winterbottom anaimirira kenako anati: “Chakudya
chija chatheka, tiyeni tikachichite kanthu.”

4

Kwa zaka zisanu kungochokera pamene Winterbottom anawononga mifuti ya Umuaro, udani wa pakati pa Ezeulu ndi Nwaka wa ku Umunneora unafika poipa kwambiri. Anthu a ku Umuaro ankanena kuti udaniwo unali utafika pa *kupha n'kudula mutu*. Sizinalinso zodabwitsa kuti udaniwu unasefukira n'kuyambukira midzi iwiri yomwe amunawa ankachokera. Posakhalitsa zinamveka kuti anthu ena akumathirirana chiphe. Kungochokera pa nthawi imene nkhani zimenezi zinayamba kuwanda, anthu am'midzi iwiriyi sankamwa uchema kapena kudya mtedza wa kola womwe unadutsa m'manja mwa munthu wam'mudzi winawo.

Nwaka ankadziwika monga munthu woyankhula zakumtima kwake mopanda mantha. Iye sankafuna kumasunga mawu kukhosi. Koma anthu ambiri anachita mantha kwambiri atamumva akuchenjeza Ulu kuti akachita masewera aona zomwe mulungu wina anaona atagwiritsa mwala anthu ake. Zinali zoona kuti anthu a mtundu wa Aninta anawotcha mulungu wawo n'kuthamangitsa wansembe wake. Komabe ankaona kuti ndi kusaganiza bwino kumaputa mulungu wawo wamphamvu, Ulu. Sankakayikira kuti mulunguyo sangamangoonerera wina akumutsira mnyozo wotero. N'kutheka kuti Nwaka ankawerengera kuti mulungu wake waumwini, yemwe ankamulambira m'mudzi mwake, amuteteza. Koma akuluakulu sanali

opusa pamene ankanena kuti munthu akhoza kukhala ndi Ngwu, koma n'kupezeka kuti waphedwabe ndi Ojukwu.

Koma zikuoneka kuti Nwaka anapulumuka ku mavuto a kusaganiza bwino kwakeku. Iye sanadwale litsipa, sanavutike ndi m'mimba, komanso sanabuule pakati pa usiku ndi ululu wam'thupi mwake. N'kutheka kuti zime-nezi ndi zimene ankaimba pachikondwerero cha Idemili cha chaka chimenecho. Iye anavala chinyawu chomwe ankachitulutsa pamwambo umenewu komanso pa zochitika zina zapadera. Chiyawuchi chinkatchedwa Ogalanya kapena kuti *Munthu Wachuma*, ndipo pachikondwerero chilichonse cha Idemili, anthu ochokera m'midzi yonse ankapita ku *ilo* wa ku Umunneora kuti akaone chinyawucho chomwe chinkavala zovala zodula kwambiri za makaka osiyanasiyana owala.

Chaka chimenecho chinyawucho chinkangoimba zinthu zodzitamandira zokhazokha. Anthu ena omwe ankadziwa chinenero cha anthu akumizimu, ananena kuti Nwaka ankayankhula zinthu zoderera Ulu.

“Anzanga mwafika pano, mvetserani mawu anga. Pali malo ena oopsa kwambiri. Malo amenewa ndi oopsa moti palibe munthu kapena mzimu umene umafikako pokhapokha ngati munthuyo wafumbata anzake kudzanja lamanja komanso abale ake kudzanja lamanzere. Koma ineyo Ogalanya, chilombo chosasewera ndi munthu, sinditenga mnzanga kapena wachibale wanga ndikamapita kumeneko.”

Chitoliro chinamutchula kuti Ogalanya Ajo Mmo, ndipo ng'oma yaikulu inavomereza.

“Ulendo wina ndinapita kumeneko ndi mnzanga, koma mnzangayo anasanduka buluzi. Kenako ndinapeza mnzanga wina yemwe anali wotsirira ena chiphe. Pambuyo pake ndinapezanso mnzanga wachitatu yemwe anali

wakhate. Ineyo, Ogalanya, yemwe ndimadula kpom komanso kukoka waa, ndinapanga ubwenzi ndi wakhate yemwe ngakhale wotsirira anzake chiphe uja amamuthawa.”

Chitoliro ndi ng’oma ija zinayankhulanso. Kenako Ogalanya anavina masitepe angapo molowera kumanja kenako kumanzere. Atatero anatembenuka kamodzim’kamodzi n’kudzayendetsa chikwanje chake m’mwamba.

“Kenako ndinabwerako. Tsiku la Afo linadutsa, tsiku la Nkwo linadutsa, tsiku la Eke linadutsa, ndiponso tsiku la Oye linadutsa. Kenako linafika tsiku linanso la Afo. Ndinamvetsera m’thupi mwanga kuti mwina ndimva penapake pakutsinatsina, koma olo mutu sunandipweteke, m’mimba simunandiwawe, ndipo sindinachite ngakhale chizungulire.”

“Tandiuzeni abale anga mwasonkhana pano, kodi munthu amene angachite zimenezi ndi wamasewera?” chitoliro komanso ng’oma ija zinavomereza mwaumodzi wawo.

Kwa zaka zisanu kungochokera pamene zimenezi zinachitika, anthu ankadzifunsa kuti zingatheke bwanji kuti Nwaka anyoze Ulu n’kumakhala bwinobwino kwinaku akupitirizabe kusimbwa komanso kuyenda mapewa ali m’mwamba. Zinali bwino kungonena kuti si Ulu amene ankamunyoza, ndipotu Nwaka sanatchule dzina la mulungu amene ankamunyoza. Koma tiyerekeze kuti ankanyozadi Ulu, kodi tinganene kuti ankazitenga kuti mphamvu zodzitetezera kuti mulunguyu asamudule khosi? Pajatu amati tikaona mbalame yaing’ono ikuvina pakati pa nsewu, timadziwa kuti amene akuyiimbira ng’oma ali patchire lapafupi.

Munthu amene ankaimbira ng’oma Nwaka anali wansembe wa Idemili, mulungu wa anthu a ku Umu-neora. Munthu ameneyu, Ezidemili, anali mnzake wapa-

mtima wa Nwaka komanso mlangizi wake. Iye ndi amene ankamuteteza komanso kumutuma kuti azichita zinthu zamtopolazi. Kwa nthawi yaitali, palibe amene anatulukira zimenezi. Panali zinthu zinagapo zimene zinkachitika ku Umuaro zimene Ezeulu sankazidziwa. Iye ankadziwa kuti ansembe a Idemili, Ogwugwu, Eru komanso Udo sankasangalala kuti mphamvu zawo zinachepa kungochokera pamene midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro inagwirana manja n'kupanga Ulu kuti akhale mulungu wamkulu kuposa milungu inayo. Koma iye sanaganize kuti m'modzi mwa ansembe amenewa angadzafike pomalimbikitsa munthu kuti ayambe kunyoza Ulu. Ndi nkhani ya nsato yopatulika imene inatumbula chinsisi chimenechi. Koma pali zinanso zomwe zinachitika zimenezi zisanachitike.

Nwaka ndi Ezidemili anakhala mabwenzi a ponda apo mpondopo kungochokera ali ana. Anthuwa ankango-khala ngati ngumbi zososoka mapiko moti nthawi zambiri anthu ankawaona ali limodzi. Makolo awo anawauza kuti ankangosiyana masiku atatu okha akubadwa. Nwaka ndi amene anali wamng'ono ndipo onse anali akatswiri pa masewera okolana komanso kulikhana. Koma m'njira zina, anthuwa anali osiyana kwambiri. Nwaka anali wamtali komanso woyererako, pomwe Ezidemili anali wamfupi komanso wakuda ngati mtsiro. Koma ndi munthu wamfupi chonchiyi amene ankatsogolera mnzakeyo ngati ng'ombe. Pamene ankakula, moyo wawo unasintha ndipo ali-yense anapeza zochita zake. Koma Nwaka sanasiye kufunsa malangizo kwa mnzakeyo akamapanga zosankha zofunika. Zimenezi zinali zodabwitsa chifukwa Nwaka anali munthu wotchuka komanso wodziwa kuyankhula, moti anzake ena ankamutchula kuti Chilombo Chodziwa Kuseweretsa Mawu.

M'kupita kwa nthawi, ubwenzi wawowu unachi-

titsa kuti Nwaka akhale paudani wosamwerana madzi ndi Ezeulu. Ezidemili ankadziwa kuti kuyambira kale, anthu asanapange Ulu, midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi inkatsogolereredwa ndi madoda amipando yaulemu monga Nwaka. Choncho zimene ankakambirana pa uwiri wawo, zinachititsa kuti Nwaka ayambe kutokosanatokosana ndi Ezeulu.

Tsiku lina pamene Nwaka ankacheza ndi Ezidemili mu *obi* wake kwinaku akutsitsira ndi uchema, anangopezeka kuti ayamba kumudya miseche Ezeulu. Koma tinene chilungamo pamenepa, izi ndi zimene ankachita nthawi zonse akakumana.

“Kodi pali aliyense amene anakuuzapo chifukwa chake mutu wa wansembe wa Ulu umadulidwa akamwalira n’kukapachikidwa m’kachisi?” anafunsa Ezidemili mwadzidzidzi. Zinali ngati funso lomwe linadikira kwa zaka zambirimbi m’mutu mwa Nwaka latumphuka lokha kuti yankho lake lipezeke. Nwaka sankadziwa chifukwa chake. Chomwe ankadziwa ndi choti Ezeulu kapena Ezidemili akamwalira, mutu yawo inkadulidwa n’kukapachikidwa m’kachisi wa mulungu wake. Koma palibe amene anayamba wamuuzapo chifukwa chake zimenezi zinkachitika.

“Kunena zoona sindinayambe ndauzidwapo chifukwa chake,” anatero Nwaka.

“Ndiyetu ndibwereke mapirikaniro akowo. Ndikufuna ndikuuze pano kuti ngakhale Ezeulu sadziwa chifukwa chake.”

Nwaka anagugudiza nyanga yake ya uchema n’kui menyetsa pansu kawiri. Iye ankadziwa kuti mnzakeyo akufuna kumufotokozera nkhani yofunika, koma kungoti sankafuna kuonetsera kuti akufunitsitsa kumva nkhaniyo. Kenako anapunguliranso uchema wina m’nyanga yake ija.

“Nkhani yake ndi yosangalatsa, koma sindikuku-

mbukira kuti ndinayamba ndauzapo munthu. Nkhani ime-neyi ndinaimva kwa bambo anga asanatisiye.” Ezidemili anasiya kaye kuyankhula n’kupyontha uchema pang’ono kuchokera m’nyanga yake. “Uchemawu uli ndi madzi,” iye anatero n’kukhala kaye duu. Kenako anapitiriza. “Mnyamata aliyense mu Umuaro muno amadziwa kuti Ulu anapangidwa ndi makolo athu kalelo. Koma Idemili analipo kale Ulu asanapangidwe. Kodi umadziwa tanthawuzo la dzina lakuti Idemili?”

Nwaka anapukusa mutu wake moyerekeza chifukwa cha nyanga uchema yomwe inali pamilomo yake.

“Idemili amatanthauza Mzati wa Madzi. Monga mmene mzati umachirikizira denga kuti lisagwe, momwemonso ndi mmene Idemili amachirikizira mitambo yamvula kuti isagwere pansi pano. Idemili amakhala kumwamba ndipo chimenechi n’chifukwa chake ineyo, wansembe wake, sindikhala pansi posayalidwa kanthu.”

Nwaka anagwedezera mutu. Zimenezi zinali zoonadi chifukwa ngakhale mwana ankadziwa kuti Ezidemili sakhala pansi posayalidwa kanthu.

“Chimenecho n’chifukwa chake ndikadzamwalira anthu sadzandikwirira munthaka. Sadzachita zimenezo chifukwa dziko ndi kumwamba ndi zinthu ziwiri zosiyana, ndipo ine ndi wakumwamba.”

“Ndiye funso ndi lakuti: N’chifukwa chiyani wansembe wa Ulu akamwalira amachitidwanso zofananazo? Sikuti Ulu sagwirizana ndi nthaka ayi. Pamene ankamupanga, makolo athu sananene kuti wansembe wa Ulu asamaikidwe munthaka. Zimenezi zinayamba ndi Ezeulu woyambirira yemwe anali wansanje komanso wakhwinthi ngati wapanoyu. Ndi iyeyo amene anauza anthu kuti akadzamwalire maliro ake adzachitidwe zofanana ndi zimene amachita ndi maliro a Ezidemili. Ndiye tsiku lina wanse-

mbe wapanoyu akadzayamba kuyankhulira mumphuno n’kumanena zinthu zimene sakuzidziwa, udzanutseke pakamwa ndi zimene ndakuuzazi.”

Nwaka anagwedezeranso mutu wake mosangalala. Kenako analiza thotholi ndi zala zake.

* * *

Malo amene Akhristu anamanga tchalitchi chawo sanali patali ndi nyumba ya Ezeulu. Pamene Ezeulu ankakhala pansu mu *obi* wake akuganizira za Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani, anamva belu lawo likukong’onthedwa kuti *ngo, ngo, ngo, ngo, ngo, ngo*. Nthawi yomweyo maganizo ake anasamuka ku za chikondwero zija n’kupita kuchipembedzo chatsopanocho. Iye anali akukayikirabe za kuopsa kwa chipembedzocho. Poyamba anali ndi maganizo akuti popeza mzungu anabwera mwamphamvu kwambiri komanso ankagonjetsa aliyense amene waima panjira yake, zinali zofunika kuti anthu akuda aphunzire njira zake. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake anavomera kutumiza mwana wake, Oduche, kuti akaphunzire miyambo yachipembedzo komanso nzeru za azungu. Nkhani zimene anamva zokhudza Wintabota komanso anthu amtundu wake, zinachititsa Ezeulu kuzindikira kuti azungu ndi anthu osukusula.

Koma tsopano Ezeulu anayamba kuchita mantha chifukwa chipembedzo chatsopanocho chinkangokhala ngati matenda a khathe. Anthu achipembedzochi sanali oti n’kuwaonetsa mano. Ukawaloleza kuti akupatse moni, ankafunanso kuti uwakumbatire. Ezeulu anali atachenjeza kale Oduche, yemwe anali atayamba kale kuchita zinthu zachilendo ndipo tsopano ankaona kuti yakwana nthawi yoti amusiyitse kupita kuchipembedzo chatsopanocho.

Koma kodi akanatani ngati zikanakhala zoona kuti mzungu wabweradi kudzalanda malo onse kuti ayambe kuwalamulira, monga mmene a ula ambiri ankanenera? Ngati zimenezi zikanachitikadi, ndiye kuti zikanakhala zoyenerera kuti anthu ambiri am’banja lake akhale m’gulu la mzunguyo. Pamene maganizo amenewa ankayendayenda m’mutu mwake, Oduche anatulukira kuchokera kuseri atavala chovala choyera komanso atakoleka m’khosi mwake kathawelo komwe anapatsidwa kusukulu. Naye-nso Nwafo anatuluka naye limodzi akusilira chovalacho. Oduche analonjera bambo ake ndipo kenako ananyamuka n’kulunjika njira ya kutchalitchi. Tsikuli linali Lamlungu moti belu lija linkaitana anthu kuti apite kumapemphero. Belulo linapitirizabe kukong’onthedwa mogonthetsa m’khutu.

Nwafo anabwereranso mu *obi* wa bambo ake aja ndipo anawafunsa ngati akudziwa tanthauzo la kulira kwa belulo, koma Ezeulu anapukusa mutu.

“Likunena kuti: *Siyani zilazi zanu, siyani koko wanu ndipo bwerani kutchalitchi*. Oduche anandiuza zimenezi,” anatero Nwafo.

“Inde,” anatero Ezeulu akuoneka kuti maganizo ake ali patali. “Wanena kuti belulo limakhala likuuza anthu kuti asiye zilazi zawo komanso koko wawo, si choncho? Ndiye tinganenetu kuti belulo likuimba nyimbo ya chiwonongeko.”

Makambirano awowa anadulidwa ndi phokoso la chisokonezo lomwe linamveka kuseri, ndipo Nwafo athamangira komweko kuti akaone kuti chikuchitika n’chiyani. Phokosolo linayamba kumveka kwambiri koma Ezeulu sankazilabadira kwenikweni. Komano kenako phokoso lakukuwa kwa azimayi kuseri kuja linayamba kumuboola m’makutu. Posakhalitsa Nwafo anatulukira chotha-

manga.

“Bambo, chibokosi cha Oduche chikusuntha,” iye anatero akupumira m’mwamba mwamantha. Kuseriko kunali chisokonezo chokhachokha ndipo phokoso lija linafika poswa makutu. Monga mwa nthawi zonse, mawu a mwana wamkazi wa Ezeulu, Akueke, ankamveka kuposa a ena onse.

“Kodi ukutanthauza chiyani ukati chibokosi cha Oduche chikusuntha?” anafunsa Ezeulu akudzuka pamene anakhala mwaulesi kwambiri. Iye ankaoneka kuti saku-chita chidwi kwenikweni ndi nkhaniyo.

“Chili pansi koma chikusuntha chokha.”

“Koma zaka zino tiona agalu amichombo ndithu.”

Ezeulu anapita kumpanda kuja kudzera pakhomo la kuseri kwa *obi* wake.

Nwafo anawapitirira bambo akewo ndipo anakaima pamene panali azimayi ankalongololawo. Akueke ndi Matefi ndi amene ankayankhula kwambiri. Mayi a Nwafo, Ugoye, anangoti kukamwa mbee. Mwa apa ndi apo anka-womba m’manja n’kuwalozetsa kumwamba. Akueke anatembenukira bambo ake atangowaona akutuluka mu *obi* muja.

“Bambo, tabwerani mudzaone malodzawa. Koma chipembedzo chatsopanochi . . .”

“Takhala chete iwe,” anatero Ezeulu, yemwe sankafuna aliyense—makamakanso ana ake aakazi—kuti azikayikira chifukwa chimene anatumizira mwana wake kuchipembedzo chatsopanocho. Posakhalitsa chibokosi chamatabwa chinatulutsidwa kuchipinda chimene Oduche ndi Nwafo ankagona, ndipo chinaikidwa pamalo ochezera. Chibokosicho, chomwe chinali chokhacho pakhomo pa Ezeulu, chinali chokhomedwa mwaukadaulo zedi. Ndi anthu omwe ankapita kuchipembedzo chatsopanocho

amene ankapezeka ndi mabokosi amenewa. Mabokosiwa ankapangidwa ndi kalipentala wina wachipembedzocho ndipo ku Umuaro mabokosiwa anali amtengo wapatali zedi.

Kunena zoonza, sikuti chibokosi cha Oduche chinkasuntha, koma zikuoneka kuti mkati mwake munali chinachake chomwe chinkafuna kutulukamo. Ezeulu anaima patsogolo pa chibokosicho asakudziwa choti achite. Chinthu chomwe chinali mkatimo chinayamba kuphiriphitha ndipo chibokosicho chinayamba kuzungulira. Ezeulu anadikira kaye kuti chisiye, kenako anawerama n’kunyamula chibokosicho kutuluka nacho panja pampanda. Azimayi komanso ana anangoti balalabalala manja ali pakhosi.

“Kaya ndi mankhwala abwino kaya ndi oipa, lero ndiwaona basi,” anatero Ezeulu chibokosicho chili m’manja, atachinyamula ngati nsembe. Potuluka kumpandaku, sanadutse kudzera mu *obi* wake, koma anatulukira pakhomu lina lomwe anthu ankadzera akamatuluka kumpandako.

Mwana wake wachiwiri, Obika, yemwe anali akungofika kumene, anamutsatira. Nwafo anali pambuyo pa Obika ndipo azimayi komanso ana ena ankawatsatira mwamantha kwambiri chapatali. Ezeulu anacheuka n’kuuza Obika kuti amupatsire chikwanje. Atafika panja pampanda pafupi ndi nsewu, anaika pansi chibokosicho. Kenako anayang’ana kumbuyo kwake ndipo anaona Nwafo, azimayi aja komanso ana ena ali khumakhuma ngati awanamizira ufiti.

“Nonse bwererani kunyumba, kaloweni kumpanda. Nyani wachidwitu ndi amene amaswedwa mutu ndi mwala.”

Azimayi ndi ana aja anachokadi n’kukaima kutso-golo kwa *obi* wa Ezeulu.

Obika anatulukira chikwanje chili m'manja ndipo anachipereka kwa bambo ake. Atalandira chikwanjecho, Ezeulu anayamba waganiza kaye kwa kanthawi ndipo kenako anachiponya pansi n'kumuuza Obika kuti akatenge chida china champhamvu. Chinthu chinali m'chibokosi chija chinali chitayambiranso kuphiriphitha koopsa. Kwa kanthawi Ezeulu ankaganiza kuti kuli bwino angochisiya pompo chibokosicho mpaka mwini wake atabwera. Koma kodi zimenezi zikanatanthauza chiyani? Zikanatanthauza kuti Ezeulu ankachita mantha ndi mphamvu zomwe mwana wakeyo anazitsekera m'bokosimo. Iye sakanalola kuti apepuke chonchi. Zikanamukwana kwammbiri anthu akanayamba kumanena kuti wansembe wa Ulu ndi wamantha ngati khwangwala.

Ezeulu analandira chida chija kuchokera kwa Obika ndipo anachilowetsa pampata wapachivundikiro chachibokosicho kuti achikanule. Obika anayesetsa kuwalanda chidacho kuti asatsekule chibokosicho, koma anangotaya nthawi yake.

"Tapita ukaima uko iwe-e," anatero Ezeulu. "Ukuona ngati muli ambuyako m'bokosimu? N'chifukwa chiyani nthawi zina umachita zinthu zobanduka mutu?" Kenako analumira mano ndipo chivundikiro cha chibokosicho chinakanganuka. Sizinali zophweka kwa wansembe wachikulire kuti achite zimenezi moti pamene chivundikirocho chinkatseguka anali ali thukuta lokhalokha. Zimene anaona m'bokosimo zinali zokwanira kuchititsa munthu khungu. Ezeulu anangoima kukamwa kuli yasa-a. Azimayi komanso ana omwe anali chapatali aja anabwera chothamanga. Nayenso Anosi, yemwe ankakhala moyandikana ndi nyumba ya Ezeulu, anali akudutsa ndipo anakhota kuti adzaone chomwe chachitika. Posakhaltisa pakhomo pa Ezeulu panali fumbi la anthu. Anthuwo anauma

matupi ataona m'bokosi la Oduche mukutuluka nsato yopatulika.

“Mulungu atikhululukire ndithu,” anatero Anosi.

“Koma mwezi watsopanowu wadza ndi zinthu!” anatero Akueke.

“Ngati amenewa ali mankhwala, chonde asuluke kotheratu,” anateronso naye Matefi.

Ezeulu anaponyera pansi chida chija ndipo anafunsa kuti: “Kodi Oduche ali kuti?” koma palibe anayankha.

“Kodi nonsenu mulibe makutu? Ndafunsa kuti Oduche ali kuti?” Ezeulu anafunsa moopseza kwambiri.

Nwafo ndi amene anayankha ndipo ananena kuti wapita kutchalitchi. Nsato yopatulika ija inayamba kutuluka m'chibokosi muja mwapang'onopang'ono ngati biri-mankhwe.

“Ndimupha mwana ameneyu akangopondanso pakhomo pano,” anatero Ezeulu kwinaku akutola chikwanje chomwe chinali pansi chija.

“Mulungu azitikomera mtima anthu ochimwafe,” anatero Anosi.

Mayi a Oduche anayamba kulira atangomva zimene mwamuna wawo ananena ndipo azimayi ena omwe anali pamalowo anayamba kuwathandiza. Ezeulu anayenda mwapang'onopang'ono n'kukalowa mu *obi* wake chikwanje chili m'manja. Nayonso nsato yopatulika ija inatuluka n'kukalowa m'tchire.

“Kodi mupindulapo chiyani mukamangolira?” Anosi anafunsa Ugoye. “Bwanji osapita kukafunafuna mwana wanuyo n'kukamuza kuti asabwerenso pakhomo pano?”

“Zimene akunenazi ndi zoonza Ugoye,” anatero Matefi. “Mutumizeni kaye kwa achibale anu kufikira mti-ma wa bambo ake utazizira. Tili ndi mwayi kuti nsato

yopatulikayi sinafe.”

“Koma ndiye muli ndi mwayidi. Ndakhala ndikunena kuti chipembedzo chatsopanochi chitionetsa malodzwa, koma anthu amanditsutsa.” Anatero Anosi akunyamuka n’kumapitiriza ulendo wake wopita ku Umunneora kuti akagule mbewu ya zilazi kwa bwenzi lake. Anosi anali wamabodza ngati mzimayi moti atangochoka pakhomopa, anayamba kumwaza nkhaniyi paliponse. Pamene dzuwa linkafika paliwombo, nkhaniyi inali itakolera midzi yonse moti inakafikanso kwa Ezidemili yemwe anali wanseme wa Idemili, mwiniwake wa nsato zonse zopatulika.

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Tsopano panali patadutsa zaka zisanu kuchokera pamene Ezeulu analonjeza mzungu uja kuti atumiza mwana wake kutchalitchi. Koma panadutsa zaka zitatu kuti akwaniritse lonjezo lakeli. Anachita zimenezi pofuna kutsimikizira kuti mzunguyo wabweradi kudzakhazikika. Poyamba, Oduche ankakana kukalowa tchalitchichi. Koma Ezeulu anamuitanira ku *obi* wake ndipo anayankhula naye mmene munthu amayankhulira kwa bwenzi lake lapamtima. Potuluka m’menemo, mnyamatayo anali atatsimikiza mtima kuchita zimene bambo ake ankafuna. Chimene chinamusingunula ndi choti anali asanamvepo bambo ake akuyankhula ndi munthu modzichepetsa ngati mmene anachitira pa nthawi.

“Zinthu padzikoli zikusintha mwanawe,” anatero Ezeulu kwa mwana wakeyo. “Sikuti zimenezi zikundisangalatsa, koma nanga ndilowera kuti? Chomwe ndingachite pamenepa ndi kungokhala ngati mbalame ija yotchekidwa *Eneke-nti-oba*. Anzake ataifunsa kuti n’chifukwa chi-

yani simatera chisawawa ikamauluka, inawayankha kuti: ‘Anthu aphunzira kugenda mwamaluli ndipo nanenso ndaphunzira kuuluka mosatera chisawawa.’ Mofanana ndi mbalameyi, ndikufuna kuti mmodzi mwa ana anga apite kwa anthu amenewa kuti akakhale maso anga. Ngati atakaona kuti kulibe chilichonse chaphindu, m’tsogolo adzasiya. Koma ngati kuli zinthuzinthu, azibwera nazo kuti nafenso tiyere m’maso. Tikatulukira njira zawo tiona ngati m’pofunika kuphunzira kuuluka mosatera kapena ayi. Dzikoli lili ngati gule amene akuvina. Munthu amene akufuna kuona gule bwinobwino, samafunika kungokhala phwi pamalo amodzi. Mzimu wanga ukundiiza kuti anthu amene sakuchita ubwenzi ndi azungu panopa anong’oneza bondo posachedwapa.”

Mayi a Oduche, Ugoye, sanasangalale ndi ganizoli. Iwo ankangoona kuti mwana wawo waperekedwa nsembe kwa mzungu, moti anayesetsa kukambirana ndi mwamuna wawo koma palibe chomwe anaphulapo.

“N’chifukwa chiyani umayankhula zathobwa? Kodi n’chiyani chikukukhudza ndi mmene ndikuchita ndi ana anga? Ukunena kuti sukufuna kuti Oduche ayambe kuchita zinthu zachilendo, kodi sukudziwa kuti pakhomo pa munthu wochita bwino pamafunika kukhala anthu omwe amachita zinthu zosiyanasiyana? M’dziko muyenera kukhala anthu abwino ndi oipa, antchito okhulupirika komanso akuba komanso anthu okhazikitsa mtendere ndi anthu oyambitsa mapokoso. Mmenemo ndi mmene chinyawu cha *obi* wozeka chimaonekera. Pakhomo pangati pamenepa, nyimbo iliyonse yomwe ungaimbe ndi ng’oma yako, pamakhala winawake woti akhoza kuivina.”

Ngati Oduche anakayikirabe pambuyo poti bambo ake amuuza zoti azipita kutchalitchi chija, chikayikiro chimenecho chinazulidwa ndi mizu yomwe atangofika

kutchalitchiko. Iye anaona ubwino wopita kutchalitchi. Anakhalanso ndi mwayi wochita nawo maphunziro a azungu. Oduche anali ndi mutu wabwino kwambiri moti anayamba kuona kuti sipatenga nthawi yaitali kuti ayambe kuyankhula Chingerezi monganso mmene aphunzitsi awo, a Molokwu, ankayankhulira ndi a Holt akabwera kudza-yendera tchalitchicho. Koma panali winanso yemwe anamukopa kwambiri. Dzina lake linali Blackett. Iye anali m'mishonale wochokera ku India. Zimamveka kuti munthu ameneyu, ngakhale anali wakuda, anali ndi nzeru kuposa mzungu. Choncho Oduche ankaona kuti ngati atadzafika pa Blackett, akhoza kudzakhala munthu wolemekezeka kwambiri ku Umuaro.

Oduche anali mwana wochangamuka komanso ankachita bwino kwambiri pamaphunziro moti aziphunzitsi ake komanso anthu ena omwe analowa tchalitchichi anayamba kumukonda. Oduche anali wamng'ono kwambiri tikayerekeza ndi anthu ena omwe anatembenukira kuchipembedzo chatsopanochi. Tikutero chifukwa anali ndi zaka khumi ndi zisanu zokha. A Molakwu, sankakayikira kuti Oduche adzachita zakupsa pamoyo wake moti pamene a mishoni ankawasamutsira ku Okperi, anayamba kukonzekeretsa kuti abatizidwe. Atasamuka, ku Umuaro kunabwera mphunzitsi watsopano, yemwe anachokera m'chigawo cham'mbali mwa mtsinje wa Niger. Nayenso ankayankhula chinenero cha mzungu ngati chobadwa nacho. Dzina la munthu ameneyu linali John Goodcountry. Goodcountry anauza anthu a ku Umuaro omwe analowa Chikhristu za amishonale omwe analimbana ndi miyambo yoipa kwambiri ya anthu am'mbali mwa mtsinje wa Niger. Amishonalewo anazula miyambo yodetsa kukhosi yomwe anthu ankachita powalimbikitsa kuti awononge akachisi awo komanso kupha agulo opatulika. Iye anawafotoko-

zera za munthu wina dzina lake Joshua Hart, yemwe anaphedwa chifukwa chochita ntchito zosonyeza chikhulupiriro ngati zimenezi.

“Ngati tili Akhristu enieni, tiyenera kukhala okonzeka kufera chikhulupiriro chathu,” iye analangiza nkhoza zakezo motero. “Tiyenera kukhala okonzeka kupha nsato zopatulika ngati mmene anthu am’mbali mwa mtsinje wa Niger anachitira popha agulo awo. Tiyenera kupeweratu kulambira mafano. N’chifukwa chiyani mukakumana ndi nsato mumainena kuti Bambo wathu? Yangokhalatu njoka yachabechabe basi! Ndipotu mukawerenga m’Bai-bulo muona kuti njoka ndi imene inapusitsa Hava. Choncho ndikuuzeni pano kuti munthu aliyense amene akuchitabe mantha kupha nsato si Mkhristu weniweni.”

Munthu woyamba kupha komanso kudya nsato yopatulika kuderali anali Josiah Madu wa ku Umuagu. Nkhaniyi sinadziwike kwa anthu ena kupatulapo anthu ochepa amene ankapita kutchalitchiku. Komabe, ambiri anakana kutengera chitsanzo chake. Anthu amenewa ankatsogoleredwa ndi Moses Unachukwu, yemwe anali wotembenukira ku Chikhristu wotchuka kwambiri. Munthu ameneyu ndi amene anali woyambirira kulowa Chikhristu ku Umuaro.

Unachukwu anali kalipentala, ndipo kudera lonselo ndi yekha amene ankadziwa ntchito imeneyi. Iye anaphunzira ntchitoyi kwa amishonale omwe anamanga mishoni yawo ku Onitsha. Ali wachinyamata, iye anakakamizidwa kunyamula katundu wa asilikali omwe anatuzidwa kuti akawononge Abame chifukwa chopha mzungu. Zimene Unachukwu anaona pa nthawiyo, zinamuphunzitsa kuti mzungu si munthu wosewera naye. Asilikali aja atamusiya, iye sanabwererenso kwawo ku Umuaro koma anapita ku Onitsha komwe anakayamba kugwira ntchito

panyumba ya m'mishonale wina yemwe ankachita zaukalipentala. Dzina la m'mishonaleyu linali J.P. Hargreaves. Kumeneko mzunguyo anamuphunzitsa ntchito yamanja ndipo atakhalako zaka khumi, Unachukwu anabwerera kwawo ndi gulu lina la azungu omwe ankapita ku Umuaro kuti akalalikire uthenga wabwino kwa anthu achikunja omwe anali kumeneko. Magulu ena awiri anali atapitapo kale kuderali koma anabwerako chimanjamanja popanda kupindula nkhosa ndi imodzi yomwe. Anthu a ku Umuaro anali ndi mitima yoguga kwambiri moti anthuwo ankallalikirira chitetete popanda kukumana ndi munthu wosonyeza chidwi ku uthenga wawo. Unachukwu ankaona kuti gulu lachitatuli linakwanitsa kuchita zakupsa ku Umuaro chifukwa cha thandizo lake. Akamaganizira moyo wake ankangodziona ngati Mose wamakono, yemwe anapita ku Onitsha n'kubwerera kwawo kuti akapululumutse mtundu wake wosochera.

Popeza anali kalipentala yekhayo m'dera lonselo, Moses Unachukwu ndi amene anamanga tchalitchi chatso-pano m'derali. Pa nthawiyi sikuti anangokhala wothandizira mphunzitsi, koma anthu ankamuonanso kuti ndi mphunzitsi payekha ndipo ankagwira ntchito yodyetsa mawu Goodcountry akachoka. Popeza anthu a ku Umuaro analibe m'busa, iye anayamba kutchedwa mphunzitsi wa katekisiru. Choncho tinganene kuti Moses Unachukwu anali ndi udindo waukulu ndithu m'tchalitchi chatsopanocho. A Molokwu, omwe anali mphunzitsi wa katekisiru Goodcountry asanabwere, anakonda kufunsa kaye Moses asanasankhe zochita. Ndiyeno Goodcountry atangofika kuderali—kungochokera tsiku loyamba lenileni—anayamba ndi kumunyalanyaza Moses. Koma Moses sanali munthu woti n'kumunyalanyaza chisawawa.

Pamene Goodcountry ankaphunzitsa za kupha nsato

yopatulika, Moses anawatsutsa poyera. Iye anachita zimenezi osagwiritsa ntchito Malemba ngakhale pang’ono. Ankangogwiritsa ntchito nthano za ku Umuaro. Zinali zodabwitsa kwambiri kuona zinthu zimenezi zikutuluka pakamwa pa Mkhristu wobatizidwa. Iye ankayankhula ndi ukumu, monga munthu yemwe ankachokera m’mudzi umene wansembe wake ankanyamula Idemili, mwini wa nsato zonse zopatulika. Choncho, Moses ankadziwa zamбири zokhudza nsato zopatulika kusiyana ndi ena onse kutchalitchicho. Kuwonjezera apo, chinthu china chomwe chinkamupatsa mphamvu zotsutsira chinali choti iyeyo anayamba kale Chikhristu komanso anapitapo ku Onitsha komwe kunachokera chipembedzo chatsopanochi. Moses anauza mphunzitsi watsopanoyo m’maso muli gwa kuti Baibulo komanso katekisimu sizilamula kuti anthu azipha nsato, yomwe munthu wolimbana nayo amakumana ndi masoka.

“Kodi ukuganiza kuti Mulungu analakwitsa ponena kuti mutu wa njoka udzaphwanyidwa?” anafunsa Goodcountry.

Funso limeneli linangodzutsa mbozi ya phe-e m’mutu mwa Moses, moti anayamba kutambasula mwa-chintambasale za miyambo ya ku Umuaro.

“Masiku ano mu Umuaro muli midzi isanu ndi umodzi. Koma kodi mumadziwa kuti mmenemu si mmene zinthu zinaliri poyamba. Makolo athu ankatiuza kuti poyamba kunali midzi isanu ndi iwiri. Mudzi umodzi unatheratu chifukwa chosalemekeza nsato. Mudzi umenowo unkatchedwa Umuama.” Anthu ena omwe anali m’tchalitchimo anagwedezera mitu, koma Goodcountry ankachita kuonekeratu kuti zimenezi zinkawanyung’unya kwambiri.

“Tsiku lina amuna asanu ndi m’modzi apachibale

anapha nsato ndipo anapempha m'modzi wa iwo, dzina lake Iweka, kuti aiphike n'cholinga choti adyere chilazi. Iwo anapereka zofunikira kwa m'bale wawoyo ndipo atamaliza kuphika, abale ake aja anayamba kutulukira mmodzimmodzi. Iwo ankapakula chilazi chija mbale mbu, n'kupitanso pamene panali mphika wandiwo zija n'kukazipakula mwadyera zedi moti zinkachita kusefukira mpaka m'milomo mwa mbale zawo. Chifukwa cha mapakulidwe ankhanzawa, ndiwo zija zinatha n'kumuperewera m'bale wawo ankaphika uja."

Anthu omwe ankamvetsera Moses Unachukwu anayamba kumwetulira, kupatulapo Goodcountry yemwe anangokhala duu ngati chosema. Oduche nayenso anamwetulira chifukwa anamvapo nkhaniyi ali mwana, moti zinangokhala ngati akumukumbutsa.

"Amuna apachibale aja anayamba kukangana kopsa, ndipo kenako ndewu yoopsa inaulika. Posakhalitsa ndewuyo inafalikira m'mudzi wonse wa Umuama, ndipo anthu anaphana zedi mpaka mudzi kutsala pang'ono kutheratu. Anthu ochepa amene anapulumuka, anathawa m'mudzimo n'kuwoloka mtsinje waukulu kupita kudziko la Ulu komwe anasakanikirana ndi anthu a mitundi ina. Midzi isanu ndi umodzi yomwe inatsala itaona zimene zinachitikazi inapita kukamang'ala kwa woombeza. Woombezayo anawauza kuti nsato inali njoka yopatulika kwa Idemili. Anawauzanso kuti mulungu ameneyu ndi amene analanga Umuama chifukwa chopha nsato yake. Kungochokera tsiku limenelo, midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi inakhazikitsa lamulo lakuti pasadzapezenso munthu wopha nsato. Inagwirizanso kuti munthu amene adzapenzeke akuchita zimenezi adzapatsidwa chilango chofanana ndi chimene munthu amalandira akapha m'bale wake." Moses anamaliza ndi kuwerenga midzi yonse yomwe

inaletsa kupha nsato pogwiritsa ntchito zala zake zakumanja. Kenako Goodcountry anayamba kuyankhula.

“Nkhani imene wafotokozayi si yoyenera kuifotokoza uli m’nyumba ya Mulungu. Koma ndinakulola kuti uimalize n’cholinga choti anzakowa adzionere okha kuti nkhanayi ndi yopanda nzeru.”

Kenako m’tchalitchimo munayamba kumveka kung’ung’udza komwe sikunkadziwika bwinobwino ngati kunali kuvomereza kapena kutsutsa zimene zinanenedwazo.

“Nkhani imeneyi ndiwasiyira anthu a mtundu wako omwewa kuti akuthandize.” Goodcountry anayang’ana mpingo wonse, koma palibe amene anayankhula. “Kodi palibe aliyense amene akufuna kuwaikira kumbuyo Ambuye?”

Oduche yemwe anakhala pafupi ndi Unachukwu anaimika dzanja lake mwamantha, kenako analitsitsa. Koma Goodcountry anamuona.

“Eya, apo.”

“Zoti Baibulo limanena kuti tisamaphe njoka ndi zabodza? Kodi si paja Mulungu anauza Adamu kuti adzaphwanye mutu wa njoka yomwe inanamiza mkazi wake?” Atangonena izi, anthu omwe anali m’tchalitchimo anayamba kumuwombera m’manja.

“Moses, wamva zimene mwanayu wanena?”

Moses anaimirira kuti ayankhe, koma Goodcountry sanamupatse danga.

“Wanena kuti iweyo ndi Mkhristu woyambirira ku Umuaro kuno ndipo umadya nawo ukalisitiya. Koma kumena zoonza ukatsegula pakamwa pako pamatuluka zowola zokhazokha. Lerotu mwana wosapola pamchombo ngati uyu wakuphunzitsa malemba. Kodi si paja Ambuye anati amene ali woyamba adzakhala womalizira, ndipo woma-

lizira adzakhala woyamba? Dziko lonse likhoza kuchoka, koma palibe mawu ngakhale amodzi omwe Ambuye wathu ananena amene sangakwaniritsidwe.” Kenako anatembenukira kwa Oduche. “Nthawi ya ubatizo wako ikadzakwana uzidzatchedwa Petulo. Pa thanthwe ili ndizamangapo mpingo wanga.”

Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu anali m’tchalitchimo aphophole m’manja mwawo ndi mphamvu zawo zonse.

Nthawi yomweyo Moses anaimirira.

“Kuteroko mukundiona ngati ndine chitsiru eti?” anafunsa Moses. “Ineyotu ndinakhalapo kumene kunayambira chipembedzo chatsopanochi ndipo ndinaona ndi maso angawa azungu omwe anabweretsa chipembedzochi. Koma ndikufuna ndikuuzeni pano kuti sindingaputsitsidwe ndi munthu yemwe wangochoka uko n’kubwera kuno n’kumadzalira kuposa eni maliro. Azungu anakutumizani kunowo samalimbikitsa anthu kuchita zimene mukunenazi. Inuyo si mlaliki woyamba kubwera kuno. Si inunso wachiwiri, koma wachitatu. Ngati muli anzeru muzingogwira ntchito imene anakutumizirani kuno n’kusiya nkhani ya nsatoyi. Palibe amene anayamba wandaaulapo kuti tsiku lina nsato inamutsekera njira pamene ankabwera kutchalitchi kuno. Ngati mukufuna kugwira ntchito yomwe munabwerera popanda mavuto, muzingochita zimene ndakuuzanizi. Koma ngati mukufuna kukhala ngati buluzi wamunthano ina yemwe anasokoneza maliro a mayi ake ndi manja ake, mukhoza kupitiriza kumachita masewera mukupangawa.” Kenako anatembenukira kwa Oduche. “Anthu akhoza kumakutchula kuti Petulo. Akhozanso kumakutchula kuti Paulo kapena Baranaba. Koma osamakonda kubwebwetukabwebwetuka pagulu ungadzanyule nazo maliro a eni. Iweyo udakali mwana,

ndiye usamachite zinthu n'cholinga chongofuna kudzio-
netsa kuti ndiwe wochenjera. Ine sindingamalimbane ndi
mwana wolira ndi mkodzo wake womwe ngati iwe. Koma
popeza nawenso wakhala m'modzi mwa aphunzitsi athu,
ndidikira moleza mtima mpaka patsiku limene udzalimbe
mtima n'kupha nsato mu Umuaro muno. Osaiwala kuti
munthu wamantha akhoza kukwirira dzenje lalikulu ndi
mawu ake, koma nkhondo ikayambika amalikumba liwiro
la mtondowadowoka kwinaku akudziipitsira.”

Chitonzo chimenechi n'chimene chinachititsa kuti
Oduche atsimikize mtima kupha nsato. Kenako anaku-
mbukira kuti kunyumba kwawo kunali nsato ziwiri, yai-
kulu ndi yaing'ono. Nsatozi zinkakhala m'khumbi mwa
mayi ake pamwamba pa khoma lomwe linanyamula tsi-
ndwi la khumbilo. Nsatozi sizinkapweteka aliyense koma-
nso zinkathamangitsa makoswe omwe anali m'khumbi-
mo. Ndi ulendo umodzi wokha pamene anthu anakayiri-
kira kuti nsatozo zameza mazira a nkhuku. Oduche anaga-
niza zokong'ontha imodzi mwa njoka zimenezi. Koma
ankafuna kuchita zimenezi mwachinsinsi komanso mosala
kwambiri kuti ikafa pasapezeke woganiza kuti ya-
chita kuphedwa.

Panadutsa masiku asanu ndi limodzi kufikira pame-
ne Oduche anapeza mpata wochita zimenezi, ndipo nga-
khale anaupiza mpata ankalakalakawo, kulimba mtima
kuja kunayamba kwamuchokera. Koma atadzilimbitsa,
anaganiza zopha nsato yaing'ono ija.

Anaikola ndi mtengo ndipo itagwara pansi. Mtima
wake unkamuletsa kuti aimenye mutu. Koma asanagwire
ntchitoyi, Oduche anamva mawu a anthu ndipo anayamba
kuchita mantha kwambiri. Mwachanguchangu anainya-
mula njokayo n'kukalowa nayo kuchipinda chogona. Ku-
meneko anapeza njira yabwino kwambiri yophera njoka-

yo. Anatsegula bokosi lomwe Moses anamupangira, ndipo anachotsamo chovala komanso tawelo yake n'kutsekera nsatoyo m'bokosimo. Pamenepo m'pamene anaupenza mti-ma wake. Oduche ankaona kuti imeneyi inali njira yabwino yophera nsatoyo chifukwa ikanafa yokha posowa mpweya, ndipo akanaiapha chikumbumtima chake osamui-mba mlandu woti wachita kuikong'ontha ndi chinthu.

Mwana woyamba wa Ezeulu, Edogo, anachoka kunyumbako m'mawa kuti akamalizitse kusema chigoba cha chinyawu. Tsopano n'kuti kutangotsala masiku asanu kuti Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chichitike. Chigoba chime-ne ankasemachi chinali choti mzimu womwe udzatuluke pansu pa nthaka udzavale. Mzimuwo unkayenera kuwonekera kwa anthu ngati chinyawu. Anthu omwe anasankhidwa kuti azidzatsatira chinyawucho ankafunika kukonzekera bwino. Ankafunika kukonzekera kudzavina mogo-metsa ndipo nawonso ankafunitsitsa kuona chigoba chachinsinsi chimene Edogo ankawasemera. Mu Umuaro munalinso anthu ena omwe ankasema zigoba za zinyawu, ndipo ena anali anamatetule. Komabe, anthu anakonda Edogo chifukwa anali wokhulupiririka. Ankati akayamba ntchito ankaisiya akaona kuti wamaliza komanso ankachita zinthu pa nthawi yake. Iye anali wosiyana ndi Obiako, yemwe anali katswiri wodziwa kuzokota mitengo. Ngakhale kuti anali wodziwa ntchito kuposa Edogo, munthuyu anali tambwali wotheratu. Obiako ankagwira zida zake akaona kuti munthu yemwe anamupatsa ntchito akubwera. Munthuyo akangochoka ankaziponyeranso pansu n'kuyamba kuchita zake. Ndiyeno Obiako akamangokhalira ntchito mwamtundu umenewu, ena ankangotenga ntchito-yo n'kumupatsa Edogo. Zikatero, Edogo ankayambapo kalikiliki kugwira ntchito-yo mpaka kuimaliza. Komabe, kusema chigoba cha chinyawu kunali kovutirapo. Munthu

akapatsidwa ntchitoyi sankasemera kunyumba kwake komwe azimayi komanso ana akanamuona. Choncho Obika atapatsidwa ntchitoyi ananyamuka n'kupita kunyumba ya mizimu yomwe inamangidwira ntchito ngati zimenezi. Nyumbayi inali pamalo ena obisika chakumapeto kwa msika wa *Nkwo*. Munthu amene sanavinidwe sankayerekeza kuyandikira nyumba imeneyo, yomwe inayang'ana kunkhalango ndipo kumbuyo kwake kunali msika uja. Nthawi zina ntchembere zinkauzidwa kuti zikazile komanso kukongoletsa kunja kwa nyumbayo ndi choko choyera, chobiriwira, chachikasu kapena ndi mtsiro, ndipo azibambo ena ankalondera pakhomu lolowera m'nyumbamo kuti wina asayerekeze kusuzumira kapena kulowamo.

Mkati mwa nyumbayo munkakhala mdima ngakhale kuti munthu ukakhalitsamo unkatha kuyamba kuona bwinobwino. Edogo anaika pansu mtengo woyera wa *okwe* womwe ankafuna kugwiritsa ntchito posema chigobacho. Kenako anamasula chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi chomwe anaikamo zida zake zosemera. Kuwonjezera pa kuchita zinthu mwachinsinsi, Edogo ankaona kuti m'nyumbayi ndi malo abwino kwambiri osemera zigoba za zinyawu. Paliponse m'nyumbamo panali zigoba zakale komanso zigoba zomwe mizimu yamakedzana inkavala. Zinthu zina zimene zinali m'nyumbayi zinali zakale kwambiri mwinanso kuposa bambo ake. Akaona zigoba zimenezi, ankapeza nyonga zoyambira kuzokota mtengo kuti patuluke chigoba chatsopano. Zigoba zina zomwe zinali m'nyumbayi zinkaoneka ngati chilombo chaukali ndipo zina zinkakhala ndi nyanga komanso mano ataliatali ngati zala za munthu. Koma zinayi mwa zigobazi zinali za mizimu yaikazi ndipo zinali zooneka mokongola. Edogo anakumbukirabe zimene Nwanyinma anamuuzza pamene anakwatira. Nwanyinma anali mkazi wamasiye yemwe

anayamba kucheza naye kungochokera ali mbeta. Popeza ankachitira nsanje atsikana a maso m'mwamba omwe ankangoti zungulizunguli kuti Edogo awaone, Nwanyima anamuuza kuti mkazi amene mawere ake samagwa ngakhale atakhala m'banja zaka zambiri amadzakhala chinyau chachikazi.

Edogo anakhala pansi pafupi ndi khomo lolowera m'nyumbayi. Anatsata malowa chifukwa pankawalako ndipo kenako anayamba kusema chigobacho. Nthawi ndi nthawi ankamva mawu a anthu odutsa panja pa nyumbayo. Koma ntchito yosemayo ikamulowerera, makutu ake ankatsekeka ndipo maganizo ake onse ankakhala pa ntchito yomwe ankagwirayo.

Posakhalitsa chigoba chija chinayamba kuoneka nkhope yake ndipo mwadzidzidzi Edogo anasiya kugoba kuja ndipo anatchera khutu kuti amve zimene munthu wina ankanena panja. Mawu omwe anamvawo ankawadziwa bwino. Anali a Anosi yemwe ankakhala pafupi ndi kwawo. Edogo anayesetsa kumvetsera mwatcheru koma sankamva bwinobwino moti anaganiza zotuluka n'kukaima paseri pa khoma lina lomwe linali pafupi ndi anthu ankayankhulawo. Apa tsopano ankatha kutola zonse zimene anthuwo anakambirana. Zikuoneka kuti Anosi ankayankhula ndi anthu awiri kapena atatu omwe anakumana nawo.

“Mukuganiza kuti ndikukuuzani zam'maluwa? Ineyo ndili pano ndinali komweko ndipo ndaona zonse ndi maso anga ambulandawa,” Anosi ankanenena zimenezi atatuzula maso ake. “Sindikanakhulupirira zikanakhala kuti wina wachita kundiiza. Chibokosicho chitangoti tsegu, munatuluka chinsato chili ngundangunda.”

“Basi usabwerezenso zimenezo,” anatero munthu wina. “Zimenezo sizingachitike kuno.”

“Inuyotu si oyamba kunena zimenezi. Anzanunso nditawabenthulira nkhani imeneyi amanena kuti sizingatheke. Bwanji nanunso mungopita ku Umuachala mukadzionere nokha mmene mudzi wonse watekesekera ndi nkhaniyi.”

“Zimene Ezeulu akuchita zili ndi pakati ndipo pa nthawi imodzimodziyo zikusamaliranso nthumbidwa yomwe ikuyamwa.”

“Ndakhala ndikumva zinthu zambiri pamoyo wanga. Koma kuchokera kale, sindinamvepo zinthu zoumitsa thupi ngati zimenezi.”

Pamene Edogo ankakafika kunyumba, mtima wa bambo ake unali ukadayaka ndi ukali. Kungoti pa nthawiyi sankapsera mtima Oduche, koma anthu onse apakamwa omwe anayandikana nawo nyumba. Anthu amenewa anali achiphamaso komanso amdyerakuwiri. Pamaso ankaoneka ngati amamuganizira, koma akakhala kumbali ankamu-sambula komanso kumutukwana nkhangongo zili gwa. Iye ankapseranso mtima anthu odutsa omwe ankabwera n’kumanena mawu ngati akhudzidwa mtima, koma pansipamtima akusangalala ndi tsoka limene linamugweralo. Komanso ngakhale zikanakhala kuti anthuwo sakuchita zinthu mwachiphamaso, Ezeulu akanawapserabe mtima chifukwa kubwera kwawo kunkangokulitsa nkhaniyo. Poyamba mkwiyo wakewo unkangoyakira mumtima, koma anapsa mtima zenizeni pamene anaona gulu la azimayi ena omwe anafika kunyumbaku kuti adzaone akazi ake. Azimayiwo anatulukira kunyumbaku akukhala amva zoti kwaoneka maliro. Ezeulu atangowaona mtima unamuwawa zedi. Iye anawamva akukuwa kuseri kuja: “E-u-u! Ana a masiku anowa ationetsa malodza ndithu!”

Atangomva zimenezi, Ezeulu anatuluka mofulumira mu *obi* wake n’kuwapitira kuseri komweko kukawatsira

mphepo. “Ndikangolowa m’nyumbamu ndi kutulukanso n’kukupezani mudakali pompano, mudziwanso.”

“Kodi talakwanso kubwera kuti tidzatonthoze mayi mnzathuyu?”

“Ndati mutuluke kumpanda kuno muzipita m’makwanu ngati simukufuna kundiphulitsa ngozi!”

Azimayi aja anatuluka mwachanguchangu kumpandako akunena kuti: “Tikhululukireni ngati takulakwirani bambo.”

Nayenso Edogo atangofika, anafotokozera bambo ake nkhani yomwe anaimva kumsika ija. Izi zinachititsa kuti Ezeulu anangotsala pang’ono kuphulika ndi mkwiyo. Edogo atamaliza kufotokozako, Ezeulu anamufunsa kuti: “Ndiye unachitapo chiyani utamva zimenezo.”

“Nanga ndikanatani?” Edogo anadabwa kwambiri ndi funsoli moti nayenso mkwiyo unayamba kusonkhana m’mutu mwake.

“Mwamumva nayenso uyu?” anafunsa Ezeulu ndipo amene ankamufunsa sankadziwika chifukwa pamalopo panalibenso munthu wina. “Edogo, munthu wina amawadyera miseche bambo ako iwe ukumva, ndiye ukundifunsa kuti ukanatani? N’chifukwa chiyani umaganiza ngati nkhu yoduka mutu? Pamene inetu ndinali msinkhu wakowu sindinkasekerera zachibwana ngati zimenezi. Ndinkati ndikamva wina akunyoza bambo anga ndinkadziwa chochita nthawi yomweyo n’kukonza zinthu. Zikafika povuta ndinkatha kuwapulumutsa makofi ochotsa uchitsiru womwe unali m’matupi mwa anthu opanda nzeruwo. Mwachidule ndingakuuze kuti ndikanakhala ineyo ndikanapita pamene panali anthuwo n’kukawaswa mitu, m’malo mobisala m’nyumba yamizimu.”

Pa nthawiyi n’kuti mutu wa Edogo utatupikana ndi mkwiyo, komabe anayesetsa kugwira lirime lake kuti liwu

lamwano lisamupulumuke pakamwa pake. Iye anadzi-gwira n’kunena mawu ena ofewerapo. “Pamene munali nsinkhu wangawu bambo anu sanatumize mwana wawo kwa azungu kuti azikapembedza mulungu wawo.”

Edogo anatuluka m’khumbimo atanyangala kooopsa. Ankaona kuti wangotaya nthawi yake kusiya kusema chigoba chija kuti adzaone chimene chachitika koma n’kupezekanso kuti wangonyozeka.

“N’zoonza kuti Obika ndi wopanda khalidwe komanso ali ndi mtima wapachala,” anatero Ezeulu, “koma mwana uyuyu ndi wozizira kwambiri. Bolanso pamene wakwiyapa akuoneka ngati munthu wamwamuna.” Ezeulu anakhala motsamira khoma ndipo kenako anayamba kukukuta mano ake.

Tsiku limeneli linali lochititsa manyazi kwambiri kwa Mkulu Wansembeyu. Zonse zimene zinachitika patsikuli zinali zozondoka moti ankangokhala ngati anadzukira kumanzere. Kuwonjezera pamenepo, chakumadzulo kunyumba kwake kunabweranso mlendo wina. Uyu anali mnyamata wochokera ku Umunneora. Popeza panali udani waukulu pakati pa Ezeulu ndi anthu a ku Umunneora, iye sanayerekeze kumupatsa mtedza wa kola chifukwa ankaona kuti akabwerera kwawo akhoza kukadwala m’mimba n’kuyamba kunena kuti Ezeulu anamuthirira chiphe. Mnyamatayo sanachedwechedwe kupereka uthenga umene anabwera nawo.

“Ndatumidwa ndi Ezidemili.”

“Owo-o? Ndikukhulupirira kuti ali bwino.”

“Inde ali bwino,” anatero nthengayo ndipo mosazungulirazungulira anatambasula chimene anabwerera, “komabe ngakhale ndanena kuti ali bwino, ndinganenenso kuti sali bwino.”

“Ngati uli ndi uthenga ingonena, chifukwa ine ndi-

libe nthawi yomamvetsera mnyamata yemwe akuphunzira kuyankhula m'zining'a."

Mnyamata uja sanalabade za mnyozowo. "Ezidemili akufuna kudziwa kuti muchita zotani ndi zinthu zoumitsa thupi zomwe zachitika pakhomo panu pano."

"Owo-o, wati zimene zachitika?" anafunsa Ezeulu atakunga zibakera zake zonse ngati wagwira ndi manjawo nkwiyo womwe unkatuluka m'thupi mwake.

"Ndiye kuti zakudutsani zimene ndimanena zija eti? Chabwino, ndikhoza kubwerezanso ngati mukufuna."

"Ndingakondedi utabwerezanso."

"Ndinati, Ezidemili akufuna kudziwa zimene mwa-konza kuchita kuti muyeretse pakhomo panu pano ku chonyansa chimene mwana wanu wachita."

"Ubwerere ndipo ukamuuze Ezidemili kuti ngati wakhuta apite kuchimbudzi, m'malo moti aziyambana ndi ine. Kwa iweyo, mwana wosapola panchombo, ukhoza kungonyamuka mwaulemu uzipita kwanu mbozi ya misala yanga isanadzuke. Ungothokoza kuti dziko linasintha masiku ano. Zikanakhala kuti unachita zimenezi padzana, ndikanakuchita zinthu zomwe sukanaziiwala kwa moyo wako wonse. Anthu amene ankasewera ndi ine ndinawachotsa zinyomphiro onse. Mpaka pano saiwala za tsiku limene anaika mutu wako mkamwa mwa ng'ona." Mnyamata uja ankafuna kunena zinazake koma Ezeulu sanamulole.

"Ngati ukufuna kuchita zambiri ndi moyo wako, mvera malangizo ndakupatsawa ndipo usayerekeze kutsegulanso pakamwa pako uli pakhomo panga pano." Ezeulu anadzuka moopseza kwambiri ndipo mnyamatayo ataona mmene munthu wamkuluyo anadzukira, anaganiza zongosuntha phazi n'kuona nsanawanjira.

* * *

Kaputeni T.K. Winterbottom anayang'ana kalata yomwe anali atangolandira kumene. Iye anali atakwiya koopsa ndi zimene anali atangomaliza kumene kuwerenga. Chibaluwacho chinachokera kwa Lieutenat Governor kudzera kwa Resident ndipo kenako chinakadutsa kwa Senior District Officer n'kudzafika kwa iyeyo. Anthu ena awiriwo analembaponso ndemanga zawo pakalatayo ndipo kenako inafika kwa Winterbottom kuti nayenso aione n'kuwapsira anthu omwe anali pansi pake.

Kaputeni Winterbottom sanasangalale ndi ndemanga imene Senior District Officer analemba. Iye analemba modzudzula zimene Winterbottom anachita potsutsa ganiizo losankha mafumu. N'kutheka kuti ndemanga imeneyi ikanalembedwa ndi munthu wina, sizikanamudinya kwenikweni. Koma kungoti Watkinson anagwira ntchito kwa zaka zitatu moyang'aniridwa ndi Winterbottom asanakwere n'kupatsidwa udindo waukulu ngati umenewu. Ndiye zinali zovuta kumalozedwa chala ndi munthu yemwe poyamba anali pansi pake.

"Masiku ano ngakhale zitsiru zikumakwezedwa pa udindo," Winterbottom anakonda kuuza ena zimenezi, "ngati nachonso chimbutuma chitangoyesa kuchita chinachake pang'ono, akuluakulu amaona n'kuchipatsa udindo. Koma kwa anthu okonda kutakataka ngati ife, omwe timachita kumera zikundu chifukwa chogwira ntchito mwakhama sitionekera chifukwa anthu amakhala kuti anazolowera kutiona tikutakataka."

Kenako anayatsa kaliwo wake n'kuyamba kuyenda mozungulirazungulira muofesi yake. Mapulani a ofesiya analemba yekha ndipo inali yotakasuka komanso yopita mphepo. Pamene ankazungulira muofesiyo anazindikira

koyamba—ngakhale ankakhala muofesimo masiku onse—kuti akaidi akamatchetcha panja n’kumaimba nyimbo zawo, zimamveka kwambiri muofesiya. Mvula inali itadula kaye kwa timasiku tingapo. Koma zinali zodabwitsa kuti ngakhale inagwa maulendo awiri okha, udzu unali utawirira kwambiri. Kenako anapita pazenera n’kuyamba kuyang’ana akaidiwo. M’modzi mwa akaidiwo ndi amene ankayambitsa nyimbo pogogoda chinthu chinachake chomwe chinkamveka ngati mwala womwe akuumenyetsa pabotolo. Akamachita zimenezi ankaimba mokweza kwambiri ndipo anzakewo ankatsirira mang’ombe ikafika pakolasi. Akaidi enawo akamavomereza nyimboyo ankaimbika zotchetchera zawo m’mwamba. Kaputeni Winterbottom anachotsa kaliwo pakamwa pake n’kumuika pakhoma la zenera kenako anaika manja ake mokhala ngati akuwonjezera kamwa lake n’kukuwa kuti: “Mukundisokosa inu!” Onse anatembenuka ndipo ataona kuti ndi Winterbottom anasiya kuimba nthawi yomweyo. Zimenezi zitangochitika, akaidiwo anayamba kutchetcha molimbikira kwambiri. Koma ankatchetcha moyandikana zedi moti wina akanachita chibwana akanapita wopanda phewa kapena chidendene. Msilikali yemwe ankawayang’anira anali ataima chapatali pansi pa mtengo wamango ndipo ataona kuti akaidiwo akusokoneza munthu wamkulu, anaganiza zongowachotsapo n’kupita nawo malo ena. Akaidiwo anachoka pamalowo akuyenda mosalongosoka m’mizere iwiri n’kupita malo ena ndipo ankangooneka ngati akakowa chifukwa cha mayunifomu komanso zipewa zoyera zomwe anavala. Zovalazi zinali zopangidwa ndi nsalu ya bafuta, koma zinali zothimbirira mochititsa nseru. Awiri mwa akaidiwo ananyamula zinganga ndipo munthu ankaimba uja anali ndi botolo komanso mwala. Atafika kumene ankapita, munthu uja anayambitsanso

nyimbo yake ija ndipo anzake aja ankamuvomereza zotchetchera zili m'mwamba.

“Ine ndi wotchetcha, nawenso ndi wotchetcha
Anyani sasekana zikundu
Ndiye n'chifukwa chiyani ukundinyoza?”

Kaputeni Winterbottom anabwereranso padesiki yake n'kukawerenganso kalata ija kachiwiri.

Cholinga chomwe ndalemba kalatayi ndikufuna kukudziwitsani kuti m'pofunika tipeze anthu ochangamuka kuchokera m'mafuko onse omwe alibe mafumu. Anthu amenewa tiwalonga ufumu. Ndiyeno kungoyambira pano “tisiya kulamulira anthu akuda mwachindunji” chifukwa zimenezi zikumabweretsa mavuto ambiri. Tikufuna tiyambe kuwalamulira kudzera mwa mafumu omwe tisankhe-wo.

Mayiko ambiri a ku Ulaya omwe amalamulira mayiko ena, amaona kuti boma limafunika kumayendetsedwa ndi azungu basi. Koma zimenezo ndi zosathandiza kwenikweni. Ndikukhulupirira kuti nonse mukudziwa bwino kuti H.M.G sagwirizana ndi njira imeneyi. Choncho m'malo moti tiziwalamulira mwachindunji kudzera mwa ma Administrative Officers, tikufuna kuyamba kuyeserera njira yatsopanoyi n'cholinga choti tithetse njira zosokonekera zimene anthu akuda amagwiritsa ntchito akamalamulirana. Tikufuna tiwathandize kukhazikitsa boma lofanana ndi lathu lomwe ndi lolongosoka, labwino komanso lotsogola. Ndipo boma limenelo lizitsogoleredwa ndi mnzawo wakuda. Koma ifeyo tizilamulira mtsogoleri wawoyo. Anthuwo sazivutika kwenikweni kumvera mnzawo wakudayo ndipo mosadziwa azikhalanso akumvera ife. Koma sikuti tikufuna kuseseratu chilichonse chokhudza

anthuwa n'kuyambiranso kuwaphunzitsa zinthu zatsopano. Zimenezo zikhoza kuwonongetsa zinthu kwambiri monga chikhalidwe, kaganizidwe komanso mbiri ya chiafrika . . .

“Koma ndiye muli mawutu. *Boma lotsogola, kaganizidwe komanso mbiri ya chiafrika.* Koma mutu wa bwanawa umagwira? Nthawi zina amangokhala ngati mutu wawo ndi dzira lopanda kanthu bwanji! Kodi iwowo anayambapo apulumutsa munthu amene anakwiriridwa panso n'kusiyidwa mutu wokha kwinku ataikidwa chilazi chowotcha pamutu kuti chiitane zilombo zidzamudye?” Kenako anayambiranso kuyendayenda muofesi muja. Koma n'chifukwa chiyani palibe amene analimba mtima n'kuuza bwanayu kuti zimene ankanenazi ndi zosathandiza komanso zosatheka? Winterbottom ankadziwa chifukwa chake. Chifukwa chake chinali choti onse ankaopa kutaya mwayi wokwezedwa pantchito kapena kulandira mendulo ya O.B.E.

Clarke anatulukira kuti adzatsanzike kuti akupita kukayendera chigawocho. Kaputeni Winterbottom anamubayibitsa ngati akumupirikitsa n'kumuuza kuti ayende bwino. Pamene ankanena zimenezi sanamuyang'ane n'komwe. Koma pamene Clarke ankatembenuka kuti azipita, Winterbottom anamuitana.

“Ukakafika ku Umuaro, ukafufuze mosamala kwambiri zokhudza mmene Wright akugwirira ntchito yake yokonza nsewu. Ukachite zimenezi mochenjera chifukwa nayenso ndi khuluku. Ndakhala ndikumva mphekesera zoti akumakwapula ogwira ntchito komanso zina zambiri zosasangalatsa. Ndikuona kuti ndisangogamuliratu n'kumupatsa chilango ndisanapeze umboni wokwanira. Zikumvekanso kuti wafika mpaka pomayenda ndi azimayi achikuda komanso kuchitira nkhanza azimuna awo . . .

Chabwino, ukhoza kunyamuka, tikumana sabata yamawa. Koma osakaiwala kumakachita zinthu mosamala. Madzi a kuno ndi oipa kwambiri moti ukapanda kusamala ukhoza kukatsegula nawo m'mimba. Uyende bwino.”

Makambirano amenewa anachititsa kuti Kaputeni Winterbottom abwerere ku kalata ya Lieutenant Governor ija ndi nkwiyo wocheperapo. Iye anayamba kumva kutopa kwambiri moti anaganiza zopita kunyumba kwake kuti akapumule.

Chinthu chomvetsa chisoni ndi boma lachitsamundali chinali choti munthu amene ankadziwa bwino anthu a ku Africa komanso njira yabwino yochitira nawo zinthu ankalamuliridwa ndi mabwana osamva za ena omwe ankangokhala phwi kumalikulu awo ndipo nthawi zonse ankafuna kuti aliyense aziyendera maganizo awo.

Zaka zitatu zapitazo, mabwanawa anakakamiza Kaputeni Winterbottom kuti asankhe mfumu ku Okperi. Iye anachitabe zimenezi ngakhale ankaona kuti n'zosathandiza. Winterbottom anatha nsapato zake kuti akwanitse kuika James Ikedi kukhala mfumu ya Okperi. James anali m'gulu la anthu oyambirira kulandira maphunziro a amishonale kudera limenelo. Koma zimene zinachitika ndi zomvetsa chisoni kwambiri. Patangotha miyezi itatu atamuika paudindowu, Kaputeni Winterbottom anayamba kumva mphekesera zoti munthuyu wayamba kuyenda mapewa ali m'mwamba komanso kuti safuna kuuzidwa zochita. Iye anakhazikitsa khoti komanso ndende yakeyake, zomwe zinali zosavomerezeka. Ankatenganso mkazi aliyense amene wa kola chidwi cha maso ake popanda kulipira chiwongo, malinga ndi mwambo. Kaputeni Winterbottom anaganiza zopita kukafufuza nkhaniyi ndipo kumeneko kunatumbukanso nkhani zina zodetsa kukhosi. Iye anaganiza zopatsa munthuyo chilango choti asiye kaye

udindo wake kwa miyezi isanu ndi umodzi. Anamulanda-nso chikalata chomudziwikitsa kuti ndi mfumu. Koma patangotha miyezi itatu, Senior Resident yemwe anabwera kumalowa patchuthi chake, analamula kuti tambwali ameneyu abwezeretsedwe paudindo wake asanamvetse bwinobwino chimene chinachititsa kuti achotsedwe paudindo. Posakhalitsa James anabwereranso paudindo wake ndipo anakhala ngati amupatsa mapiko moti anayamba kuchita zachinyengo, kubera anthu komanso kuwalima pansana kuposa kale lonse. Ankachita izi mochenjera kwambiri moti sizinali zophweka kumugwira.

Pa nthawiyo kunali ntchito yokonza nsewu komanso kuchotsa zithaphwi zomwe zikanathandiza kuti anthu azichita ukhondo n'kuchepetsa kufala kwa matenda a nthomba. Mfumu James Ikedi inayamba kuchita zachinyengo ndi woyang'anira ntchitoyo, yemwe anali wankhanza komanso chiledzerere. Munthu ameneyu ankadziwikanso kuti Wowononga Nyumba za Anthu.

Kaputeni Winterbottom anavomereza ntchitoyi m'mbuyomo ndipo mapulani anakonzedwa kuti nyumba za anthu zisakhudzidwe. Koma woyang'anira ntchitoyi ankapita m'makomo mwa anthu n'kumakawauza kuti akapanda kupereka ndalama, nsewu udutsa pakhomu pawo. Anthu ena atakamang'ala nkhanayi kwa mfumu yawo, anauzidwa kuti angochita zimene auzidwazo. Mfumuyo inawauza kuti munthu amene ankayang'anira ntchitoyo akungochita zimene walamulidwa ndipo aliyense yemwe alibe ndalama akabwereke kwa mnzake. Anawauzanso kuti ngati alibe kotu akakongole, angachite bwino kungogulitsa mbuzi kapena zilazi zawo. Chodabwitsa ndi choti ankakonda kuchita zimenezi m'makomo a zikhwaya okhaokha komanso m'midzi yochita bwino basi. Pofuna kudziwitsa anthuwo kuti sakusewera ndi munthu, iye

anagwetsa nyumba za anthu atatu omwe ankachedwa kupereka ndalama. Anachita zimenezi ngakhale kuti nsewuwo komanso ngalande zomwe ankafuna kukumba zinkayenera kudutsa kutali kwambiri ndi nyumbazo. Pamapeto pake Mfumu Ikedi inakatamuka kwambiri itagawana ndi mnzakeyo ndalama zomwe anthuwo ankapereka.

Akaganizira zimenezi, Kaputeni Winterbottom ankaona kuti bolakonso woyang'anira ntchitoyo yemwe anali wochokera kwina, kusiyana ndi chimunthu chadyera chomwe chinkalima pansana abale ake enieni ofanana nawo khungu. Woyang'anira ntchito uja anali wafuko lina ndipo m'maso mwa anthu am'midzi yomwe ntchitoyi inkagwiridwa, ankangokhala ngati wochokera kudziko lina. Koma tikakamba za Mfumu Ikedi, panalibe chimene anthu akananena kuti amuikire kumbuyo chifukwa anthuwo anali abale ake ndipo iyeyo anali mfumu yawo.

Kaputeni Winterbottom ankaona kuti zimenezi ndi zam'magazi chifukwa pafupifupi munthu aliyense wa ku Africa akangopatsidwa udindo ankasintha ngati chilombo chakutchire n'kuyamba kuzunza komanso kubera abale ake. Ngakhale azungu ankalephera kumvetsa chifukwa chake anthuwa ankachita zimenezi.

Mfumu Ikedi inalidi yochenjera kwambiri moti pamene Kaputeni Winterbottom ankayamba kumufufuza pa nkhaniyi anakwanitsa kukwirira machimo ake onse, moti anamupeza m'manja mwake muli moyera. Iye anakwanitsa kufufuta mapazi ake onse moti analephera kumugwira. Choncho anangoisiya nkhaniyo, komabe ankadziwa kuti tsiku lina adzakumanizana naye. Koma woyang'anira ntchito uja anagwidwa kali kutsaya ndipo anapatsidwa chibalo choti agwire ntchito kwa miyezi khumi isanu ndi itatu popanda malipiro.

Kaputeni Winterbottom sankakayikira kuti Mfumu Ikedi inkachitabe zachinyengo. Koma kungoti pa nthawiyi inali itafika pochenjera ngati njoka. Chinthu china chomwe mfumuyi inachita posonyeza ukathyali wake chinali kunyengerera anthu ake kuti azimutchula dzina laulemu lakuti *obi* lomwe limatanthauza mfumu. Iye anadzipatsa maina ambirimбири audindo moti ankafuna kuti anthu azimutchula kuti *Wolemekezeka Bambo Wathu Ikedi Woyamba, Obi wa ku Okperi*. Zimene anachitazi zinali zachilendo kwa anthu a mtundu wake omwe anali asanakhalepo ndi mfumu chiyambire. Boma lachitsamunda ndi limene linabweretsa nzeru zimenezi m'madera onse a mtundu wa chiIbo omwe kunalibe mafumu. M'kanthawi kochepe, mafumu anaphukadi ngati bowa ndipo ambiri mwa mafumu amenewa anali adyabolosi.

Kaputeni Winterbottom anaganizira nkhani ya m'kalata ija usiku wonse ndipo anaona kuti palibe chimene angachite kuti aletse zimene mabwana ake ankafuna. Iye anali atawononga kale mwayi wake wokwezewa pa ntchito chifukwa chonena maganizo ake pa nkhani ngati zomwezi. Kunena zoonza, anthu onse omwe anabwera ku Nigeria kuchokera ku Ulaya anali atakwezedwa maudindo n'kukhala ma Residents. Koma Kaputeni Winterbottom sanasunthe ngakhale phazi limodzi. Ngakhale udindo wa Senior District Officer unkamukanika. Pampeto pake anaganiza zongogonjera n'kuchita zimene mabwana akewo ankafuna. Koma sikuti anachita zimenezi chifukwa ankagwirizana nazo. Njira yatsopano yolamlirira anthu akudayi inamuthandiza kuona kuti asamalimbane ndi mtunda wopanda madzi potsutsa zinthu zimene akuchita kudziwa kuti sizingasinthe. Ngakhale anthu omwe anali kumbali yake nawonso anali atayamba kumutembenukira n'kumanena kuti iyeyo ndi amene akuche-

dwetsa kuti njirayo iyambe kugwira ntchito. Ndiye popeza analamulidwa kuti apeze anthu oti akhale mafumu, basi anaganiza zongochita zomwezo. Koma ulendo uno anaona kuti asabwerezenso kusankha munthu wofanana ndi Ikedi. Anazindikira kuti si bwino kusankha munthu wophunzira komanso woyera m'maso. Malo ena omwe ankafunika kusankha mfumu kunali ku Umuaro ndipo kumeneku kunali munthu wina yemwe ankamuganizira kuti angakhale mfumu yabwino. Iye ankafuna kusankha wansembe wakhungu looneka ngati katondo uja, yemwe analimba mti-ma n'kubwera ku Okperi kudzanena chilungamo cheni-cheni, zomwe anthu ena a mtundu wake sakanayerekeza kuchita. Chomwe ankangofunika kuchita kunali kutsimikizira kuti munthuyo adakali moyo. Kaputeni Winterbottom ankakumbukira kuti anakumana naye kamodzi kapena kawiri atapita kukayendera Umuaro. Koma zime-nezo zinali zoti zinachitika zaka ziwiri zapitazo.

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Zimene mwana wa Ezeulu anachita ndi nsato yopatulika ija zinakwiyitsa midzi yonse. Ezeulu ndi amene anali wo-yamba kuvomereza nkhaniyi. Koma mtima wakaduka ko-manso uthenga wosuliza womwe wansembe wa Idemili anatumiza zinachititsa kuti awakwiyire kwambiri. Ezeulu anadabwa kuti ngakhale anthu ena omwe ankawaona ngati anzake apamtima, anamutembenukira poyerayera n’ku-mafalitsa mabodza onena za iye.

“Mtima wa mnzakodi ndi tsidya lina. Ndi bwino kuti tsoka langati limeneli lizichitika mwa apa ndi apo kuti tizidziwa anzathu enieni. Ndithu ngati mphepo itapanda kuwomba, n’zosatheka kuona maliseche a nkhuku,” ana-tero Ezeulu.

Kenako anaitana mkazi wake kuti amufunse kuti Oduche ali kuti. Koma mkazi wakeyo atafika anangoima manja ali m’khosi ndipo sananene kalikonse. Kwa masiku awiri tsopano, iye anali ndi mkwiyo waukulu. Zinkamu-wawa kuti mwamuna wakeyo anatumiza Oduche kuchi-pembedzo chatsopanocho ngakhale ankamuletsa. Ndiye n’chifukwa chiyani tsopano ankanoletsa chikwanje chake kuti aphe mwanayo atachita zinthu zimene anaphunzitsi-dwa kuchipembedzo chomwe anamutumiza okhacho?

“Kodi ndikuyankhula ndi munthu kapena chiboli-boli?”

“Sindikudziwa kumene ali.”

“Sukudziwa? He-he-he-he,” Ezeulu anaseka modzikakamiza ndipo kenako mkwiyo unasonkhananso pankhope pake. “Sindikukayikira kuti m’mutu mwakomo ukundinena kuti ndine munthu amene wabweretsa mbozi kunyumba kwake n’kumadabwa abuluzi atayamba kumuchezero. Sukuti ukunama ayi. Koma usandinamize kuti sukudziwa kumene kuli mwana wako . . .”

“Ndi liti tsopano limene wasanduka mwana wa-
nga?”

Ezeulu anakhala ngati sanamve funsolo. “Si zoti uzindiuza kuti sukudziwa kumene ali. Ndikudziwa kuti ukunama. Kamutenge kumene wamubisa. Sindinayambe-po ndapha munthu chibadwire ndipo sindingayambire pa mwana wanga.”

“Koma ndikuuzeni bambo, mwana wangayu sadzapitanso kuchipembedzo chimenechi.”

“Zimenezo sizingatheke. Ine ndi amene ndinamutumiza kumeneko ndipo palibe amene angasinthe zimenezi. Ngati pali wina amene sakusangalala nazo, akhoza kubwera n’kudzandikolowola masowa.”

Madzulo a tsiku limenelo Oduche anabwerera kunyumba akuoneka ngati tambala wonyowa ndi mvula. Atafika anapereka moni kwa bambo ake mwamantha ndipo bambo akewo sanamuyankhe. Atalowa kumpanda kuja ana ena, makamaka Obiageli, anayamba kumugwiragwira kuti atsimikizire ngati anali adakali bwinobwino. Iye anakayikira kuti mwina mulungu wamuvulaza penapake. Nawonso azimayi anamulandira mokhala ngati sakukondwera naye.

Ngakhale kuti Ezeulu sankafuna kuti aliyense aone kuti ali ndi nkhwana kapena kuti aoneke kuti ali ndi chisoni, sikuti anangozikankhira kunkhongo zinthu zimene Oduche anachita chifukwa cha chipembedzo chake chatsopa-

nocho. Usiku wa tsiku limene zimenezi zinachitika, Ezeulu sanagone tulo ndi nkhaniyi. Mwambo wa ku Umuaro ankaudziwa bwino ndipo sankachita kufunika kuuzidwa ndi wansembe wa Idemili zoyenera kuchita. Ngakhale mwana wamng'ono ankadziwa kuti ngati munthu wapha nsato mwangozi ayenera kukhazika pansi mtima wa Idemili pokonza mwambo wa maliro a njokayo ndipo maliro ake ankayenera kuchitika mwadongosolo ngati a munthu. Koma palibe chilichonse chimene chinanenedwa za munthu amene angatsekere nsato m'bokosi. Ezeulu sananene kuti zimene anachita mwana wakeyo zilibe vuto. Komabe, sikuti unali mlandu waukulu kwambiri moti mpaka wansembe wa Idemili kufika pomutumiza uthenga woopseza. Unali mlandu umene munthu ankayankhana ndi mulungu wake waumwini. Komanso Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chinali chitangotsala pang'ono kuchitika. Pa chikondwerero chimenechi, Ezeulu ankafunika kuyeretsa midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi ku machimo awo omwe ankaunjikana mpaka kumwamba. Chaka chilichonse, Ezeulu ankayenera kuchita zimenezi anthu asanayambe kuponyera mbevu zawo m'nthaka kuchitira kuti mulungu angakwiye mvula n'kukanirira kumwamba.

Pasanapite nthawi yaitali kuchokera pamene Oduche anabwera, Ezeulu analandira mlendo. Mlendoyo anali asewere ake a ku Umuogwugwu. Munthu ameneyu, Onwuzuligbo, anali m'modzi mwa anthu amene anabwera chaka chapitacho, panyengo ngati yomweyi kuti adzamve chifukwa chake mwamuna wa mwana wamkazi wa Ezeulu anamenyedwa kenako n'kusenzedwa kubwera m'mudziwu.

“Zikuoneka kuti imfa yanga ili pafupi,” anatero Ezeulu.

“N'chifukwa chiyani mwatero, asewere? Kodi ndi-

kuoneka ngati imfa?”

“Pajatu munthu akaona chinthu chachilendo ndiye kuti imfa yake yayandikira.”

“Komadi patenga nthawi ndisanapondenso pakho-mo pano. Komatu paja pali mwambi wakuti, chinthu chime chapha kholo n’chimenenso chimadya tiana. Kusa-bweraku si chipongwe, tonse tinapsinjika ndi zina. Izi zili apo, tikuganiza kuti ngati zonse zingayende bwino tibwera kuti tidzatengenso mkazi wathu kuti abwerere kumudzi.”

Ezeulu anatumiza mwana wake, Nwafo, kuti akatenge mtedza wa kola kwa mayi ake. Kenako anatenga mbale yomwe munali choko choyera.

“Kwayani chidutswa cha *nzu*,” anatero Ezeulu akuponyera mlendo wakeyo choko chija. Mlendoyo anatola chokocho n’kulemba mizere itatu yowongoka pakati pa miyendo yake ndipo nzere wachinayi anaulemba mokhala ngati akudula mizere itatu yowongoka ija. Kenako anapakanso chokocho pachala chake chamathu chakumwendo n’kuponyanso chokocho kwa Ezeulu yemwe anachitola n’kuchibwezera pamalo ake.

Atamaliza kudya mtedza wa kola uja, Onwuzuligbo anatsukuluzza kukhosi kwake n’kuyamikira Ezeulu chifu-kwa cha kolayo. Kenako anafunsa kuti: “Koma mkazi wathu ali bwino?”

“Mkazi wanu ali bwino. Sikuti anagona pamphasa pakatipa. Chomwe chikumusautsa ndi njala basi. Pakho-mo pano padutsa galuwakuda. Nwafo, pita ukaitane Akueke kuti adzapereke moni kwa makolo a mwamuna wake.”

Posakhalitsa Nwafo anatulukiranso ndipo anabwera ndi uthenga wakuti wamuuza Akueke ndipo akubwera.

Akueke sanachedwe kutulukira. Iye anaponya moni kwa bambo ake ndipo anapereka wapachanza kwa Onwuzuligbo.

“Kodi akazi anu, a Ezinma ali bwino?” anafunsa motero Akueke.

“Kwa lero ali bwino. Koma sitikudziwa kuti mawa adzuka bwanji.”

“Nanga bwanji ana awo?”

“Onse ali bwino, yavuta ndi njala basi.”

“Aaah!” anatero Akueke, “zimenezo si zoon. Bwanji inuyo mukuoneka obiriwira?”

Akueke atabwerera kuseri kuja, Onwuzuligbo anauza Ezeulu kuti anthu akwawo akuganiza zobwera m’ mawa wa tsiku lotsatira.

“Sikuti ndithawa pakhomo pano, mukabwera mudzandipeza,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Komatu sikuti muganize kuti tikubweretsa nkondo. Tikubwera kuti tidzalumane makutu monga azilamu ndi asewere.”

Ngakhale kuti anali atangotuluka m’ sabata yovuta kwambiri pamoyo wake, nkhani imeneyi inachititsa kuti Ezeulu apezenso kachimwemwe. Iye anaitana mkazi wake wamkulu, Matefi, ndipo anamuuza kuti akonzekere kudzaphikira alendowo.

“Alendo ake ati?” anafunsa Matefi.

“Mwamuna wa Akueke komanso achibale ake.”

“Inetu ndiliba chinangwa choti ndidzawaphikire, komanso lero si lamsika.”

“Ndiye ukundiuza zimenezo kuti nditani?” anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Sindikufuna kuti muchitepo kanthu. Koma Akueke ayenera kuti ali ndi chinangwa. Ndiye mwina mungandipemphere kwa iyeyo kuti andigawireko.”

“Misala imene uli nayoyo uzidziwa nayo malire ochitira zinthu. Kodi ukufuna kuti ineyo ndikakusakire chinangwa kenako ndibwere nacho n’ kudzakupatsa? Kodi

Akueke chikumukhudza n'chiyani pa nkhaniyi? Kodi iyeyo ndi mkazi wanga? Ndakhala ndikukuuza kambiri mbiri kuti ndiwe mkazi woipa mtima kwambiri. Chilichonse chimene ndingakuuze kuti uchite sumachichita mosangalala, pokhapokha ngati chili chako kapena cha ana ako basi. Usandiyankhulitse pambali wamva!” kenako anapumira kaye. “Ngati ukufuna kuti pakhomo pano pakhalebe pokwanira iwe ndi ine, pita ukapange zimene ndakuuza. Mayi a Akueke akanakhala kuti adakali ndi moyo lero sakanamalemba malire pakati pa ana ako ndi ake, iweyonso ukudziwa zimenezo. Ndichokere pano ndisanadzuke n'kukukuntha.”

Ngakhale kuti Ezeulu ankadera nkhwawa mwana wake Ekueke komanso ankafunitsitsa kuti abwerere kwa mwamuna wake, palibe ankayembekezera kuti angavomereze zimenezi poyera. Munthu yemwe ankaonetsera poyera kuti mwana wake wamkazi samufuna pakhomo pake ankakhala ngati akuuza mwamuna wa mwana wakeyo kuti azikamuchitira nkhanza mmene akufunira. Choncho pamene mwamuna wa Akueke ankabwera kudzachonderera kuti akufuna kutenganso mkazi wake, Ezeulu anayamba ndi kusonyeza ngati sakufuna.

“Si kulakwa kuti munthu afune kutenganso mkazi wake n'kupita naye kwawo,” iye anatero. “Koma ndikufuna ndikuuze kuti tikangoyamba kubzala mbewu, akhala kuti watha chaka ali pakhomo panga pano. Kodi unayamba wabweretsapo chilazi, koko kapena chinangwa chako kuti iyeyu kapena mwana wake azidya? Kapena ukuganiza kuti adakali ndi moyo chifukwa cha chakudya chomwe anadya asanachoke kwanuko chaka chatha?”

Atamva mawu amenewa, Ibe ndi achibale ake anayamba kupepesa.

“Chimene ndikufuna kudziwa,” anatero Ezeulu,

“ndi choti mundipatsa chiyani posamalira mkazi wanuyu kwa chaka chathunthu.”

“Asewere, ndikumvetsa zimene mukunena,” anatero Onwuzuligbo. “Nkhaniyi ingoisiyani m’manja mwathu. Nokhanso mumadziwa kuti ngongole ya kwa apongozi simatha yonse. Tikagula mbuzi kapena ng’ombe timalipira ndalama ndipo imakhala yathu. Koma tikakwatira mkazi timafunika kumangolipirabe mpaka tidzalowe m’manda. Sitikukana kuti tili ndi ngongole yanu. Ndipo ngongole yathu ndi yaikulu kwambiri kuposanso mmene mukuneneramu. Nanga bwanji zaka zambirimбири zimene munamusamalira kungochokera pamene anabadwa kufikirira pamene tinamutenga m’manja mwanu? Kunena zooni tili ndi ngongole yaikulu kwambiri kwa inu. Komabe tikukupemphani kuti mutipatse nthawi. Chonde tagwira mwendo wanu.”

“Ndikugwirizana ndi zimene mwanenazo,” anatero Ezeulu, “koma sikuti ndikugwirizana nanu chifukwa cha mantha.”

Pamakambiranowa panali mng’ono wa Ezeulu, dzina lake Okeke Onenyi. Panalinso ana awiri a Ezeulu, Edogo ndi Obika. Chibwerereni, Okeke Onenyi sanayankhule zambiri. Koma atamvetsera makambiranowa kwa kanthawi, anayamba kuona kuti mchimwene wakeyo akungobwitikiza madeya m’diwa, moti anaganiza zotumbula nkhani yeniyeni yomwe ankafunika kukambirana.

“Asewere anga, ulemu wanga upite kwa inu. Chibwerereni sindinayankhule chilichonse chifukwa lirime langa ndi lolemera. Munthu amene amavutika kuyankhula amangobisalira kumbuyo kwa anzake omwe amayankhula bwino. Komabe ine ndalephera kupirira. Chonde ndiloleni kuti nditulutse chimene chili kukhosi kwanga. Ndakhala ndikumvetsera mosamala kwambiri kuchokera pachiya-

mbi zimene mwakhala mukukambirana. Ndimafunitsitsa kumva chinthu chimodzi kuchokera pakamwa panu, koma nonse simunachitchule. Anthu amakhala ndi zolinga zosiyanasiyana akamakwatira. Kupatulapo ana omwe tonse timawafunawa, amuna ena amakwatira kuti mkaziyo azidzawaphikira chakudya. Ena amafuna kuti azidzawathandiza kulima, pomwe ena amangofuna munthu woti azikamumenya. Tsopano ndikufuna kumva yankho la funso ili kuchokera pakamwa panu: Kodi Ibe wabwera kudza-tenga mkaziyu chifukwa choti akusowa munthu woti azimumenya masiku ano?”

Onwuzuligbo analonjeza pamaso pa onse kuti Akueke sadzamenyedwanso ndi mwamuna wake. Kenako Ezeulu anatumiza munthu kuti akafunse Ekueke ngati akufuna kubwerera kwa mwamuna wake. Poyamba ankakhala ngati sakufuna, koma kenako ananena kuti akhoza kupita ngati bambo ake atagwirizana nazo.

“Asewere anga, ulemu wanga upite kwa inu,” anatero Ezeulu. “Akueke abwera, koma osati lero. Akufunika nthawi kuti akonzekere. Lero ndi tsiku la Oye, choncho adzakupezani sabata yamawa patsikunso la Oye. Akadzafika, chonde muzidzamusamalira bwino. Kunena zoon, si nzeru kuti mwamuna azimenya mkazi wake. Ndimadziwa kuti mwamuna ndi mkazi wake amakangana nthawi zina. Zimenezo si zachilendo ngakhale pang’ono chifukwa ngakhale anthu apachibale omwe anatuluka mimba imodzi amatha kukangana kapena kusemphana chichewa. Ndiye kuli bwanji anthu oti angokumana okulakula. Ayi ndithu, sizingatheke kuti asakhulane. Choncho nanunso mukhoza kumakakangana, koma zisamachite kufika pomenyana. Basi ndiimire pamenepa.”

Ezeulu anathokoza Ulu kuti mosayembekezereka mavuto omwe anali pakati pa Akueke ndi mwamuna wake

athetsedwa. Iye sankakayikira kuti Ulu anachita zimenezo kuti maganizo ake akhale m'malo n'cholinga choti adza-chite bwino mwambo woyeretsa midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro kuti anthu ayambepo kubzala mbewu zawo munthaka. Madzulo umenewo, anthu omwe ankamutha-ndizira okwana asanu ndi mmodzi anatulukira kuti adza-wapatse malangizo. Kenako anthuwo ananyamuka n'kuyamba kulengeza m'midzi yonse kuti Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chichitika pa tsiku la *Nkwo*.

Ugoye anali akuphikabe chakudya chamadzulo pamene anamva wolengeza uthenga akukong'ontha *ogene* wake. Ugoye anali ndi chizolowezi chophika mochedwa kwambiri.

Ezeulu anakonda kudzudzula Matefi chifukwa chophika mochedwa. Komabe, Ugoye ankanyanya ndipo ndi amene ankayenera kumadzudzulidwa kwambiri. Komakungoti anali wanzeru komanso wochenjera kuposa mkazi wamkuluyo. Iye sankaphika chakudya mochedwa akakhala kuti ndi iyeyo amene akuphikira mwamuna wake. Akakhala kuti sakuphikira mwamuna wake, mwisi wake unkamvekera patali kwambiri usiku. Ugoye anali munthu wamphwayi kwambiri ndipo zimenezi zinkangowonjezeka akakhala kuti akusamba. Mzimayi akakhala panyengoyi ankakhala wodetsedwa ndipo sankaloledwa kuphikira munthu aliyense wamkulu.

Mwana wake, Obiageli, komanso mwana wamkazi wa Akueke, dzina lake Nkechi, ankaimbirana nthano.

Nwafo anakhala penapake pafupi ndi nsanamira yapakati pa khumbilo n'kumangowayang'ana ndipo mwa apa ndi apo ankauza anzakewo pamene alakwitsa poimba nthanozo.

Ugoye anali akutakasa ndiwo zomwe zinkatokota pamoto. Kenako anavuula nthiko womwe ankatakasira

mumphika n'kuwuseteka kuti aone ngati zikukoma. Phokoso la kulira kwa *ogene* analimva ali mkati mochita zimenezi.

“Takhalani chete inu, ndikufuna ndimve zimene nthengayo akunena.”

Ngo ngo ngo ngo. “Ora Obodo, mvetserani! Ezeulu wandituma kuti ndidzalengeze kwa inu kuti Chikondwerero cha Nkwani chichitika patsiku la *Nkwo*.” *Ngo ngo ngo ngo.* “Ora Obodo, mvetserani! Ezeulu wandituma . . .”

Obiageli anali atadukiza kaye nthano yake kuti mayi ake amve uthenga unkalengezedwawo. Pamene ankadikirira, anaona nthiko ankatakasila ndiwo uja utaimikidwa pafuwa ndipo anadzipatsa chochita popitiriza kusetekera nthikowo mpaka unayera mbe-e ngati watsukidwa.

“Wosusuka iwe,” anatero Nwafo, “Ndi nkhanitu zosetekaseteka zomwezi zimene zimachititsa kuti azimayi asamamere ndevu!”

“Nanga iweyo ndevu zako zili kuti?” anafunsa Obiageli.

Ngo ngo ngo ngo. “Ndibwerekeni makutu anuwo abale anga-a. Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu wandituma kuti ndidzauze mwamuna komanso mkazi aliyense kuti Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chichitika pa tsiku lamsika lotsatira la *Nkwo*.” *Ngo ngo ngo ngo.*

Mfuwu ya wolengeza uthengayo inayamba kuzimiririka pamene ankatsetsereka n'kumalowera njira yopita ku Umuachala.

“Bwanji tingoyambiranso nthano ija?” anafunsa Nkechi.

“Inde,” anatero Obiageli. “Kalekalelo, mtengo waukulu wa zipatso za *ukwa* unagwera Nwaka Dimkpolo ndipo unamupha. Ndidziimba nthanoyi ndipo iwe uzindivo-mereza.”

“Komatu ulendo wapita uja ndimavomereza ndine,” anayamba kuwiringula Nkechi, “ulendo uno ukufunika kumayankha ndi iweyo.”

“Iwetu ukufuna uyambe kuvuta. Wekhanso ukuziwa kuti tinali tisanamalize nthanoyi pamene wolengeza uthenga uja amadutsa.”

“Usalole Nkechi,” anatero Nwafo. “Akukuonerera chifukwa ndiwe mwana.”

“Palibetu amene watchula dzina lako pano, Nachimphuno.”

“Iwetu ndikukhudula. Misozi ikukuyabwa eti?”

“Usamumvere wozerekayu Nkechi. Ndikamaliza kuimba nthano imeneyi nawenso uimba yako ndipo ine ndizikuvomereza.” Nkechi anagwirizana nazo ndipo Obiageli anayambiranso kuimba nthano yake ija.

Mtengo wa Ukwa unapha Nwaka Dimkpolo

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Ndi ndani angandilangire mtengo wa Ukwa?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Chikwanje chidule mtengo wa Ukwa

m’ malo mwa ine

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Ndi ndani amene angandilangire chikwanje?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Wosula zitsulo alanga chikwanje m’ malo

mwa ine

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Ndi ndani amene angandilangire wosula

zitsulo?

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Moto umuwotcha wosula zitsulo

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Ndi ndani amene angandilangire moto?
E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo
Madzi azimitsa moto m'malo mwa ine
E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo
Ndi ndani amene ataumitse madzi m'malo
mwa ine?
E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo
Dziko liumitsa madzi m'malo mwa ine
E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo
Ndi ndani atandilangire dziko? . . .

"Iyayi, iyayi. Sifika kumeneko," anatero Nkechi nyimbo ija ili mkati.

"N'chiyani chingachitikire dziko lapansi mtsikana wopanda nzeru iwe?" anafunsa Nwafo.

"Palibe. Inetu ndanena zimenezi kuti ndingomuyesa Mkechiyu," anatero Obiageli.

"Wamabodza iwe, zoona mmene wakuliramo ku-malephera kuimba nthano yophweka ngati imeneyi?"

"Zakuwawatu! Bwanji kulowerera za weni, Nachi-mphuno. Tachionerani chilipaakazi."

"Amayi, Obiageli akandiputanso ndimuswa."

"Ingoyerekeza kumumenya uone. Ngati misala ya-ko yayamba kukhodzokera ndiiphinya m'mutu mwakomo."

Obiageli anapitiriza kuimba nthano ija:

Ndani atandilangire madzi?
E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo
Dziko yamwa madzi onse m'malo
mwa ine
Kodi dziko lichita chiyani?
Dziko liyamwa madzi

Kodi madzi achita chiyani?

Madzi azimitsa moto

Kodi moto uchita chiyani?

Uwotcha wosula zitsulo

Kodi wosula zitsulo achita chiyani?

Asungunula chikwanje

Kodi chikwanje chichita chiyani?

Chidula mtengo wa Ukwa

Kodi mtengo wa Ukwa uchita
chiyani?

Ugwera Nwaka Dimkpolo

E-e Nwaka Dimkpolo

Ndi ndani amene atandilangire
mtengo wa Ukwa?

“Basi tiyeni tiimbe nthano ina,” anatero Obiageli. “Nthano imeneyi ilibe pothera.” Pamenepo Obiageli anatolanso nthiko uja, womwe unali utangochokanso mumphika unali pamoto uja, kuti ayambe kuunyambita. Koma mayi ake anamukwatula m’manja.

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Azimayi ndi azibambo anayamba kutulukira kumsika wa *Nkwo* ndipo posakhalitsa kunali nantindi wa anthu. Popeza linali tsiku lapadera, azimayi anatchena zovala zabwino-zabwino komanso zibangiri zopangidwa ndi minyanga ya njovu. Ena anavala ndolo zooneka mosiyanasiyana ogwirizana ndi kukongola kwa m'thumba mwa amuna awo. Azimayi ena ochepa kwambiri ankagula zinthuzi ndi ndalama zomwe ankazipeza pokhetsa thukuta lawo. Popita kumsikaku, azibambo ambiri ankabwera atanyamula mikunda ya uchema, ndipo ena anachita kuimangirira m'chivuno ndi zingwe. Azibambo amenewa akamayenda mikundayo inkangoti lendelende ngati zithumwa. Anthu omwe anabwera molawira anakhala m'mithunzi ya mitengo ndipo anayamba kumwa mowa uja ndi anzawo, achibale komanso azipongozi ndi azilamu awo. Amene anabwera mochchedwa anakhala pantetete. Mwamwayi kunja kunali kusanyambe kutentha kwambiri.

Mlendo akanabwera pachikondwererochi, akanaganiza kuti anthu a ku Umuaro ndi ogwirizana kwambiri. Pa tsikuli udani umene unalipo pakati pa mudzi wa Umuoneora ndi Umuachala unkaoneka ngati watha kaye. Tsiku lapita, anthu am'midzi iwiriya akakumana ankayang'ana na ndi diso lankhwezule komanso ankachita zinthu mosamala ngati amva zoti mnzawoyo akufuna kuwapha. Ndipo zinali zoonekeratu kuti chikondwererochi chikangotha

udaniwu upitiriza pamene unasiyira. Koma pa tsiku lachikondwerero lokhali, onse ankamwa uchema limodzi chifukwa ankadziwa kuti palibe munthu wanzeru zake amene angafike potsirira mnzake chiphe pamwambo woyeretse-dwa ku machimo. Ankaona kuti munthu wotereyu akhozanso kuyenda pamvula atatenga mankhwala oopsa omwe akhoza kuwononga moyo wake.

Mkazi wamng'ono wa Ezeulu anali akuyang'ana tsitsi lake pakalilole yemwe anamuika pamiyendo yake. Iye sanakhutire ndi mmene Akueke anamangira tsitsi lake. Zimenezi zinamuwawa kwambiri chifukwa iyeyo anayesetsa kuchita zonse zomwe akanatha kuti Akueke aoneke bwino.

Komabe iye anasangalala kuona mizere yakuda ya *uli* komanso yachikasu ya *ogalu* yomwe inalochedwa pathupi lake. Zikanakhala kuti zonse zinali bwino, ngati mmene zinaliri chaka chapita, iye akanakhala woyambirira kukafika kumsika kuja. Koma ulendo uno anali ndi nkhowa kwambiri.

Miyendo yake inkakhala ngati ikumulemera chifukwa cha katundu wamaganizo yemwe anali m'mutu mwa-ke. Iye ankayenera kukapempherera kuyeretsedwa kwa khumbi lake chifukwa cha mlandu umene Oduche anapalamula. Chifukwa cha zimenezi, ulendo uno sanaikidwe pa mndandanda wa azimayi ambirimbiri a mu Umuaro omwe ankachita nawo dzoma lokumbatirana. Tchimo lomwe linathimbiritsa khumbi lake linachititsa kuti patsikuli achite zosiyana ndi zimenezo. Chinanso chimene chinkamuwawa kwambiri chinali choti sankafunikanso kuvala chibangiri chake chomwe anayembekezera kuchivala kwa nthawi yaitali. Chibangiri chimenechi chinkachititsa kuti mkazi mnzake, Matefi, azimuchitira nsanje yoyaka moto.

Iye anali akupukutabe chibangiri chakecho pamene

Matefi anatuluka m'khumbi mwake n'kumapita kumsonkhano. Atangoyenda pang'ono, anaima kaye n'kunena kuti: “Kodi mayi a Obiageli, ndikudikireni?”

“Ndikuchedwetsani, mukhoza kuuyamba ndikupezani.”

Atamaliza kukonzeka, Ugoye anapita kuseri kwa khumbi lake komwe kunali nkhwani woyambirira ndipo anathyola masamba anayi n'kuwamanga pamodzi ndi chanthochi. Atachoka kumeneko anakalowa m'khumbi lake n'kukaika masambawo pagome. Kenako anapita pathandala lansungwi n'kukaona poto wandiwo komanso *foofoo* yemwe anaphika kuti Obiageli komanso Nwafo adye pa nthawi ya nkhomaliro.

Kenako Akueke anaima pakhomo la khumbi lake n'kuyang'ana kukhumbi la Ugoye.

“Kodi simunamalizebe kukonzeka? N'chifukwa chiyani mukungoti jijirijijiri ngati nkhuu yotetela?” anafunsa Akueke. “Tikachedwatu tikapeza malo okhala atatha.”

Kenako anapita kukhumbi la Ugoye atanyamula nkhwani wake kumanja. Akueke anayamba kusirira zovala komanso chibangiri cha Ugoye chija.

Pamene ankanyamuka n'kumapita kumsika kuja, Akueke anafunsa Ugoye kuti: “Kodi n'chifukwa chiyani Matefi akuoneka wokwiya m'mawa ngati uno? Ndina muona pamene amanyamuka paja, nkhope yake imangooneka ngati wadya maliro.”

“Nanensotu ndifunse iwe, kodi mesa ndi mkazi wa bambo ako?”

“Ndinamuona akudutsa apa, koma samakuyang'anani ndi diso labwino. Koma anakutsanzikani pamene amanyamuka?”

“Inde ananditsanzika. Koma samanditsanzikira ku-

kondwa.”

“Ndakumanapo ndi anthu okakala mitima pamoyo wanga,” anatero Akueke, “koma sindinaonepo nkhalamo yangati imeneyi. Kuipa kwake kumachita kufuka utsi. Kungochokera pamene bambo anamupempha kuti aphikire mwamuna wanga komanso anthu akwawo dzana lija, akumandiyang’ana ngati akundiona ndi matumbo omwe.”

* * *

M’mbuyomo, pa tsiku la *Nkwo* ngati limeneli kumsikaku kunkamveka chiphokoso chachikulu ngati chimphepo chamkuntho. Koma ulendo uno, phokoso lake linkangomveka ngati kulira kwa njuchi. Anthu anali akukhamukirabe kumsikako kuchokera mbali zonse za Umuaro. Pamene gulu la anthu ena linkadutsa pakhomo pa Ezeulu, Ugoye ndi Akueke analilowa n’kumapita nalo limodzi. Mayi aliyense wa mu Umuaro ananyamula nkhwani kudzanja lake lamanja. Azimayi omwe analibe masambawa anali alendo ochokera kunja kwa Umuaro, omwe anangobwera kudzaonerera zochitikazo. Azimayi a gulu lomwe linkayenda ndi Ugoye komanso Akueke aja ankakambirana nkhani zosiyanasiyana kwinaku akuponya mapazi patsogolo. Koma pamene ankayandikira kumsikako, phokoso la anthu linayamba kumveka kwambiri moti anayamba kuvutika kumvana.

Atangofika kumsikako, akazi asanu a Nwaka anatulukira ndi mkokomo waukulu. Akaziwa sanavale zibangiri zotchipa mofanana ndi akazi ambiri a mu Umuaro omwe anakwatiwa ndi pantchafu. Iwo anavala zinthu zodula zopangidwa ndi minyaga ya njovu. Kuwonjezera apo, sikuti anavala zinthuzi mosinira. Anazivala kuyambira muakakolo mpaka m’mawondo. Popeza mwamuna wawo anali

mpondamatiki, akaziwa ankayenda modzimva ngati sana-yambe apondapo pakhomo lachimbudzi. Maso a anthu anangoti yuu pamene akaziwa ankayenda mwapang'ono-pang'ono ngati nkono kwinaku akukhala ngati akuuza anzawo ubwino wosankha mwamunamuna, mmalo mongotola chilichonse bola chili chachimuna. Kayendedwe kawo kankafanana ndi kayendedwe ka chinyawu cha Ijele, chomwe chimanyamula mapazi ake movutikira kwambiri chifukwa cholemedwa. Akaziwa anavalanso zovala za makaka osiyanasiyana zomwe zinali zodula kwambiri. Pa nthawiyo zinthu zopangidwa ndi minyanga ya njovu komanso zovala zamakaka osiyanasiyana zinkapezeka ndi anthu owerengeka kwambiri ndipo aka kanali koyamba kuti anthu aone zovala zochuluka chonchi zikutuluka pakhomo la munthu m'modzi.

Obika ndi mnzake wapamtima, Ofoedu, anakhala limodzi ndi anyamata ena atatu ochokera ku Umuagu. Onse anakhala pamphasa yopangidwa ndi mitsitsi ya mtengo wa *ogbu*. Anyamata onsewa anakhala mozungulira mikunda ya uchema womwe anabweretsa. Pambali pawo panali mtsuko wopanda kathu womwe anali atangogwetsa kumene. Mmodzi mwa anyamatawo anali ataledzera kale, koma Obika ndi Ofoedu ankangokhala ngati sanaulawe ndi dontho lomwe.

“Kodi Obika,” anafunsa m'modzi mwa anthu aja, “n'zoona kuti mkazi amene ukufuna kumukwatira sanabwerenso kunyumba kwanu kungochokera pamene anabwera kudzaonekera?”

“Inde sanabweredi,” anayankha motero Obika. “Zimene zimachitikira ine zimakhala zosiyana ndi anthu ena onse. Mnzanune ngakhale ndimwe madzi amapezeka kuti anditsakamira m'mano.”

“Akunama musamumvere,” anatero Ofoedu.

“Nkhani yake ndi yakuti mayi a mkaziyo sakupeza bwino m’thupi, ndiye bambo ake anamupempha kuti akhalebe konko kwa kanthawi kuti azisamalira mayi akewo.”

“Ndinadziwa kuti nkhani imene ndinamva ija ndi yabodza. Kodi ndi mtsikana uti amene angayerekeze kukana kupita kunyumba kwa mnyamata wooneka bwino, *ugonachomma* ngati Obika?”

“Ayi amwene, isiyeni nkhani imeneyo,” anatero munthu ankaoneka kuti waledzera uja, “Mwamunatu si kuoneka bwino kokha.”

Kenako, kunamveka kulira kwa *ikolo*. *Ikoloyo* ankailira moitana midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi mogwirizana ndi maina awo: Umunneora, Umuagu, Umuezeani, Umuogwugwu, Umuisiuzo ndi Umuachala. Pamene *ikoloyo* ankatchula dzina la mudzi uliwonse, kumsikako kunkamveka mfuwu yaikulu. Kenako maina aja anabwerezedwanso ndipo ulendo uno anayamba ndi kutchula mudzi waung’ono kwambiri. Zimenezi zitangochitika, anthu anayamba kulimbikira kumwa mowa wawo kuti Wansembe Wamkulu akamatuluka kukhosi kwawo kukhale kutayera.

Tsopano kulira kwa *ikolo* kuja kunayamba kuwonjezereka. Nthawi zina *ikoloyo* ankatchula maina a anthu ofunika kwambiri mu Umuaro monga Nwaka, Nwosisi, Igboneme komanso Uduezue. Koma kwambiri ankatchula maina a midzi yonse komanso milungu yawo.

Kenako *ikoloyo* anakhazikika n’kuyamba kulemekeza Ulu, yemwe anali mulungu wa Umuaro yense.

Obiozo Ezikolo ndi amene ankaimba *ikoloyo*. Iye anali munthu wachikulire tsopano, koma kaimbikwe kake ka ng’oma kankaposa aliyense. Zaka zambiri zapitazo, adakali mnyamata wamagazi, anthu onse am’midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro anaganiza zomupatsa udindo wa

ozo chifukwa anali ndi luso lalikulu pa nkhani yotekesa mitima ya anthu ndi ng'oma kuti apite kunkhondo. Koma popeza anali atakalamba tsopano, zinkadabwitsa kuti mphamvu zokang'anthira ng'oma mwamphamvu choncho ankazitenga kuti. Ngakhale kukwera *ikolo*, yomwe inali ng'oma yaikulu kwambiri ngati phiri, kunkafunika mnyamata wanyonga, osati munthu wofumbwa ndi ukalamba ngati iyeyo.

Anthu omwe anakhala pafupi mozungulira ng'oma yaikuluyo ankamuyang'ana katswiri wakaleyu ali pamwamba atatanganidwa nayo ntchito yake. Munthu wina yemwe ankamudziwa bwino anakuwa mwamphamvu n'kumupatsa moni.

Nayenso anamukuwira munthuyo kuti: “Musadabwe nazo zimenezi. Kungoti mzimayi wokalamba amasanduka mtsikana akamavina gule yemwe anamuzolowera.” Anthu omwe anali pansi paja atamva zimenezi anayamba kuseka.

Ng'oma ya *ikolo* inapangidwa kale kwambiri kuchokera ku mtengo waukulu wa *iroko* pamalo omwe mtengowo unagwera. Ng'omayi inali yakale kwambiri ngati Ulu ndipo amisiri anazokota mtengowo n'kupanga ching'oma chachikuluchi. Ng'oma ya *ikolo* sinkasunthidwa kaya kuwombe dzuwa kapena kugwe mvula. Chimtengo chomwe anapangira *ikoloyo* chinazokotedwa zithunzi za anthu komanso nsato, ndipo kuseri kwake kunali makwerero. Popanda makwerero amenewa, woimba sakanatha kukwera pamwamba. *Ikoloyo* akamaimbidwa pa nthawi ya nkondo. Anthu ankatulutsa zigaza za mitu ya adani omwe anawapha kunkhondo ndipo ankabwera kudzazikoleka pa *ikoloyo*. Koma ulendo uno sizinali choncho chifukwa ankaimbidwa pa nthawi ya mtendere.

Kenako *ogene* anakong'onthedwa kuchokera kuka-

chisi wa Ulu ndipo *ikolo* anavomereza n’kuyamba kulira molemekeza mulunguyo. Pa nthawiyi amithenga a Ezeulu anayamba kupanga njira pakati pa khamu la anthu lija kuchokera mbali ina ya bwalolo. Ngakhale kuti onse anali atatenga zikwapu zaminga, anavutikabe kuti apange nji-rayo. Anthuwo anakhala mothinana ndipo anali atasokonezeka ndi chisangalalo moti sankafuna kusuntha. Koma amithengawa anayesetsa kunyetsa anthuwo ndi zikwapu moti anakwanitsa kupanga njira mpaka pakati penipeni pa bwalo la msikawo. Atangofika pakatipo, amithenga aja anayamba kugwiritsa ntchito zikwapu zawo mwamphamvu kwambiri mpaka pamene anthu onse atathawapo n’kusiya bwalo lozungulira. Azimayi onse anali atanyamula nkhwani wawo m’manja. Azimayiwa anachititsa kuti zinthu zivute kwambiri chifukwa onse ankafuna kukhala kutsogolo. Koma mphongo zonse zinalibe nazo ntchito zokhala kutsogolo moti zinakhala kumbuyo kwenikweni.

Ogene uja anaimbidwanso. Nayenso *ikolo* anayamba kuimbidwa motetemula Mkulu Wansembe. Azimayi anayamba kuyendetsa masamba awo aja mowadutsitsa pankhope zawo. Ankachita zimenezi kwinku akupereka mapemphero awo kwa Ulu, mulungu wakupha komanso kupulumutsa anthu.

Ezeulu atangoonekera, anthu onse anayamba kukuwa ndi chisangalalo ndipo mkuwowo uyenera unamveka m’midzi yapatali kwambiri.

Iye anathamangira chakutsogolo, kenako n’kudzaima mwadzidzidzi moyang’anizana ndi *ikolo* uja. “Pitiriza kuyankhula,” anatero Ezeulu kwa *ikolo* uja, “Ezeulu akumva zimene ukunena.” Kenako anawerama n’kuvina masitepe atatu kapena anayi n’kudzaweramukanso.

Iye anavala nkhwende yopangidwa ndi mlaza ndipo

inkangoti yaliyali m'chiuno mwake. Theka la kumbuyo kwa thupi lake, kuchokera pachipumi mpaka kuphazi, anali atadzipaka choko choyera. Kumutu kwake kunali lamba wachikopa ndipo palambapo panaikidwa nthenga ya chiwombankhanga yoloza kumbuyo. M'dzanja lake lamanja anali atanyamula *Nne Ofo*, yomwe inali mayi a ndodo zonse za anthu audindo mu Umuaro. M'dzanja lake lamanzere anali atagwira ndodo yaitali yachitsulo, yomwe inkamveka ndi phokoso lothimbirira akaibaitsa pansi. Kenako anayenda masitepe angapo motang'adza miyendo yake, ndipo ankati akayenda sitepe imodzi ankaima kaye. Posakhaltisa anayambanso kuthamanga diso lili pamtunda mokhala ngati waona chinachake chochititsa chidwi pakati pa bwalo lija ndipo anawongola dzanja lake n'ku-dzayendetsa ndodo ija kuchokera kumanja kupita kumanzere. Ndipo anthu amene anali chapafupi anayamba kumva kugundana kwa ndodo ya Ezeulu ndi ina yomwe sankatha kuiona.

Pamene zimenezi zinkachitika anthu ambirimбири anayamba kuchita mantha moti anangoti balalabalala, kuthawa powopa kuti zinthu zina zosaoneka zomwe zili pamalowo zingathe kuwavulaza.

Pamene ankakafika pakatikati pa bwalo lija, Ezeulu anayamba kufotokoza zimene zinachitika pamene Ulu ankapangidwa komanso zopinga zomwe Mkulu Wansembe anakumana nazo m'njira pamene ankayenda ulendo wa masiku anayi.

“Pa nthawi imeneyo,” iye anatero, “abuluzi asanyambe kumera michira, anthu onse anasonkhana ndipo anasankha kunyamula mulungu wawo watsopano. Ndina-wauza kuti:

“Kodi ndine ndani kuti ndinyamule moto umenewu pamutu panga? Munthu samameza nthangala ya udala

ngati akudziwa kuti sangakwanitse kukaitulutsa kuchi-mbudzi.

Iwo anandiuza kuti: “Usawope. Munthu amene watumiza mwana wake kuti akagwire kanyimbi amamupa-tsanso madzi osamba m’manja.

“Kenako ine ndinati: ‘Chabwino ndavomera.’

“Kenako tinaiyambapo ntchito. Tsiku limenelo linali la *Eke*. Tinagwira ntchito mpaka pa tsiku la *Oye*, la *Afo* kenako la *Nkwo*. Pamene dzuwa linkatuluka m’zikope mwake n’kuyamba kunyambita mame padzikoli, ndinanyamula *alusi* wanga n’kuuyambapo ulendo ndipo anthu onse ankanditsatira pambuyo. Munthu wina anayamba kuliza chitoliro kumanja kwanga ndipo wina ankaimba chitoliro china n’kumamuvomereza kumanzere kwanga. Kumbuyo kwanga phokoso lamididi ya anthu onse linkandipatsa mphamvu. Koma kenako mwadzidzidzi chinachake chinandigwera kunkhope. Ndinazindikira kuti mbali imodzi kunkagwa mvula, ndipo mbali ina kunali kouma gwa. Ndinayang’ananso bwinobwino ndipo ndinaona kuti ndi Eke.

“Ndinamuuza kuti: ‘Kodi ndiwe Eke?’

“Iye anayankha kuti: ‘Inde ndine Eke, amene amachititsa kuti munthu wamphamvu alume pansu.’

“Ndinatenga dzira la nkhuu n’kumupatsa. Kenako analitenga n’kulidya ndipo ananditsegulira njira. Tinapitiriza ulendo wathu n’kudutsa mitsinje komanso nkhalango. Nditafika pamalo ena ndinapeza chitsa chikufuka utsi. Chitsachi chinali kutsogolo kwa njira yomwe tinkayenda ndipo pambali pake panali anthu awiri akuwumbudzana modetsa nkhuu. Anthu amene ankanditsatira aja atangoona zoopsazo analikumba liwiro n’kundisiya ndekha. Koma ineyo nditayang’ana bwinbwino anthu ankame-nyanawo ndinaona kuti ndi Oye.

“Ndinamuuza kuti: ‘Kodi Oye, ndiweyo waima panjira yanga?’

“Iye anati: ‘Inde ndine Oye. Ine ndi nkhalakale ndipo monga ukudziwira mikokoyogona ndi imene imakhala ndi miphika yambiri yosweka chifukwa chophika kwa nthawi yaitali.’

“Ndinatenga choko choyera n’kumupatsa ndipo iye analandira n’kundipatsa njira yoti ndidutse. Kenako ndinadutsa malo olima komanso nkhalango. Pamenepa m’pamene ndinayamba kuona kuti mutu wanga ukundilemera. Nditayang’ana bwinobwino ndinaona kuti ndi Afo.

“Ndinati: ‘Kodi ndiwe Afo?’

“Iye anayankha kuti: ‘Inde ndine Afo, mtsinje waukulu womwe munthu sangakwanitse kuutsira mchere mpaka kukolera.’

“Ine ndinayankha kuti: ‘Ine ndi Ezeulu, munthu walinunda yemwe ndi woipa kwambiri kuposa wakhate.’

“Afo anakaikira n’kundiiza kuti: ‘Dutsa, zakozo ndi zoipa kwambiri kuposa zanga.’

“Ndinadutsadi ndipo dzuwa linabwera n’kuyamba kunditenta, koma mvula inagwa n’kunditsitsimula. Kenako ndinakumana ndi Nkwo. Nditayang’ana kumanzere kwake ndinaona mzimayi wokalamba motheratu akuvina modabwitsa paphiri. Nditayang’ana kumanja ndinaona kavalo komanso nkghosa. Ndinapha kavaloyo n’kupukuta magari omwe anali pachikwanje chomwe ndinagwiritsa ntchito ndi nkghosa ija ndipo chinayereratu.”

Pa nthawiyi n’kuti Ezeulu ali pakati pa bwalo lija. Iye anabaya pansi ndi chitsulo ananyamula chija ndipo anachisiya chili ndengundengu ndipo anavina masitepe angapo n’kumalowera kumene kunali *ikolo* kuja. *Ikoloyo* anali atasiya kaye kuimbidwa. Pamenepo n’kuti azimayi onse akuyendetsa masamba awo aja kumaso kwawo.

Ezeulu anayang'ana azibambo ndi azimayi onse a mu Umuaro mokhala ngati akufufuza winawake. Kenako anazula ndodo ija pansi n'kuinyamula ndi dzanja lamanzere ndipo kudzanja lake lamanja anagwira mayi a ndodo zonse aja. Kenako analumphira m'tsogolo n'kuyamba kuthamanga mozungulira bwalolo.

Azimayi onse anangoti ndindindi kutsogolo ndipo anayamba kuimba nthungululu. Pa nthawiyi azimayi omwe anali kutsogolo anayamba kukankhanakankhana. Pamene Mkulu Wansembeyo ankathamanga n'kumadutsa pakati pa khamulo, azimayi onse anali atagundika n'kuyendetsa masamba aja mozungulira mitu yawo ndipo kenako ankamugenda nawo wansembe uja. Masambawo ankangokhala ngati dzombe mazanamazana lomwe linkawulukira wansembeyo.

Ugoye yemwe anakankha anzake mpaka kukafika kutsogolo kwenikweni anayamba kupemphera chapansi-pansi. Anachita zimenezi mobwerezabwereza pamene wansembe ankayenda n'kumalowera mbali yomwe anaima:

"Mulungu wathu wamkulu Ulu, mulungu wakupha komanso kupulumutsa, ndikukupemphani kuti muyeretse nyumba yanga kuchoipa chimene mwana wanga anachita. Ngati pali choipa chinanso chimene ndinayakhula ndi pakamwa panga, kuona ndi maso anga, kumva ndi makutu anga, kuponda ndi mapazi anga kapena chomwe chinabwera ndi ana anga, anzanga kapena achibale anga, chonde lolani kuti chipite limodzi ndi masambawa."

Kenako anayendetsa masambawo mozungulira mutu wake ndipo anawavunga mwamphamvu kwa Mkulu Wansembe pamene ankathamanga modutsa pamene anaima paja.

Amithenga asanu ndi m'modzi aja anali akutsatira wansembeyo chapafupi. Mwa apa ndi apo, m'modzi mwa

iwo ankawerama n'kutola mpukutu umodzi wa masamba aja n'kuyambiranso kuthamanga. Ndiyeno ng'oma ya *ikolo* ija inadzukanso ndipo inayamba kulikitika pamene Mkulu Wansembe uja ankathamanga n'kumalizitsa kuzungulira bwalo la msikawo. Kenako anapitirizabe kuthamanga kwambiri n'kukalowa m'kachisi anatuluka uja ndipo nawonso amithenga ake aja anamutsatira pambuyo. Anthuwa atangozimiririka, *ikolo* uja anayamba kukutumulidwa koopsa ndipo kenako anangosiya kamodzin'kamodzi kuti de! Pamenepo panachitika mpungwepungwe wovuta zedi ndipo phokoso lake linayamba kupuma mwamphamvu n'kumakwera kumwamba ngati kuphulika kwa bomba. Koma m'kupita kwa nthawi linayamba kuto nthola. Komabe, zimenezi sizinachitike kwa nthawi yai-tali. Posakhalitsa khamu lija linayambanso kuchita phokoso lalikulu podziwa kuti Mkulu Wansembe walowa bwinobwino m'kachisi wa Ulu ndipo zinkangokhala ngati wanyamula machimo a Umuaro yense pogwiritsa ntchito mipukutu ya masamba isanu ndi umodzi imene wamithenga uja anatola.

Mokhala ngati achita kupatsidwa chizindikiro, azimayi onse a ku Umunneora anangoti balamanthu, n'kuyamba kuthamanga mozungulira bwalo lija kwinkaku akudiriza masamba anagwera pabwalo aja. Poyamba zinkangochitika mwachinam'balala koma kenako onse anayamba kugwirana moti posakhalitsa fumbi lochokera kumapazi awo linangoti kobo-o. Ndi azimayi okhawo amene mapazi awo ankalemedwa chifukwa cha ukalamba komanso zibangiri za mnyanga ya njovu omwe ankathamanga movutikira. Atangozungulira ulendo umodzi, anthu amene ankavutikawa anatuluka n'kukaima pambali akupuma ngati adya tsabola. Kenako nawonso azimayi am'mudzi wa Umuagu anadzambatuka n'kuyamba kuthamanga mo-

zungulira. Ena onse anangoima n’kumawawombera m’manja. Pagulu limeneli palibe aliyense amene anatuluka. Pamene azimayi a mudzi wachisanu ndi umodzi ankayamba kuthamanga, masamba a nkhwani omwe anali anagwera pabwalo lija anali atanyenyekeratu n’kusakanikirana ndi fumbi.

Azimayi onse atangomaliza kuthamanga, chitsinda cha anthu chija chinayamba kugawikana m’timagulu ting’onoting’ono ta anthu apachibale komanso mabwenzi. Akueke anayamba kuyang’ana mchemwali wake wamkulu, Adeze, yemwe anamuona akuthamanga ndi azimayi am’mudzi wa Umuezeani. Iye sanayang’ane kwa nthawi yaitali chifukwa Adeze ankaonekera patali. Iye anali langwani moti ngakhale anthu odalitsidwa ndi msinkhu ankamulekeza m’mapewa. Kuwonjezera pamenepa anali ndi khungu looneka mwakatondo. Akanakhala kuti anali mphongo, bwenzi akufanana kwambiri ndi bambo ake kuposa Obika.

“Inetu ndimaganiza kuti wauyamba kale wakunyumba,” anatero Adeze.

“Ndamuona Matefi posachedwapa, koma ndikuganiza kuti iweyo sanakuone.”

“Nanga ine angandione bwanji kufupika kumeneku? Kwa iye uja ndimangooneka ngati udzudzu weniweni.”

“Kodi mwayambananso kapena? Ndinaona zizindikiro za nkwiyo pankhope pake. Mmene diso lake limaoonekera, amangokhala ngati akufuna kulavula khala lamoto. Kodi wamutokosa ndi ndani ulendo uno?”

“Achemwali, musiyeni Matefi ndi mavuto ake, tiyeni tikambirane zina zaphindu.”

Pamene ankanena zimenezi, Ugoye anatulukira.

“Ndakhala ndikukufunafunani paliponse awirinu,”

iye anatero. Kenako anakumbatira Adeze yemwe anka-mutchula kuti *Mayi a Mwamuna Wake*.

“Koma ndiye wasowatu ngati chibwano cha nkhu-ku. Ana ali bwanji?” amafunsa Adeze. “Kodi n’zoona kuti wayamba kuphunzitsa ana kuti azidya nsato?”

“Ukuganiza kuti nkhani imeneyi ndi yoseketsa?” Ugoye anayankhula moipidwa kwambiri. “Si zodabwidwa kuti ndiwe m’modzi mwa anthu omwe sanayerekeze kubwera kudzandiona tsoka limene lija litandigwera.”

“Kuteroko munakumanadi ndi tsoka? Palibetu amene ananditsina khutu. Kodi khumbi lanu linabuka moto kapena winawake anamwalira?”

“Wayambapotu kunyengezera kuti sanamve! Usamutengere ameneyu Ugoye. Osaiwala kuti nayenso ndi wam’mutu,” anatero mchemwali wake uja, “iyeyu ndi woipa kwambiri kuposa bambo ake.”

“Kodi ukuganiza kuti chimene kambuku angabe-reke chingakhale chabwino?”

Palibe amene anayankha chipongwe chimenechi.

“Usandikwiyire Ugoye. N’zoonadi ndinamva nkha-ni yonse. Koma kungoti sindimafuna kuti anthu achite kuona kuti tabalalikiratu ndi nkhanayi. Pali anthu ambiri ansanje omwe amasangalala akationa titagwira njakata. Ine sindimafuna kupereka chonena kwa nkholokolo zime-nezi. Mwamukumbukira mzimayi wamisala uja, Akueni Nwosisi, uja banja lake lakhala likuchita zoipa zamtundu uliwonse mu Umuaro muno? Eti atamva nkhani imeneyi anabwera chothamanga ngati watenga uthenga wamate-nda, mwini wakeyo akuti kudzandipepesa kumeneko. Koma ine ndinamufunsa kuti: Tikayerekezera munthu amene m’bale wake waika nsato m’bokosi ndi munthu amene m’bale wake anagwidwa akuchita zopusa ndi chi-weto kuseri kwa nyumba, woipa kwambiri angakhale

ndani pamenepo? Andisamale mkazi Nwosisi! Tsiku lina adzandiphulitsa ngozi.”

Ugoye ndi Akueke anaseka kwambiri ndipo m’maganizo mwawo ankatha kumuona Adeze wazilopeyo akufunsa Akueni funso limeneli.

“Ndikuganiza kuti sungabwerere kwanu osakasuzumira anthu kunyumba kwa bambo ako. Si tipitira limodzi?” anafunsa Akueke.

“Inde, ndikufuna ndikawatsireko diso ana. Komanso ndikufuna ndikamutsire mphepo Ugoye ndi Matefi. Ndikuona kuti sakuwasamalira bwino bambo anga. Taonani mmene athera masiku ano, angotsalatu mafupa okha-okha!”

“Chonde, amuna athu, ndagwira mwendo wanu,” anadandaula Ugoye mwamantha. “Ine ndekha ndimayese-tsa. Ndi bambo anu aja omwe amandizunza. Komanso ukamakayankhula nawo,” anawonjezera nkhope yake ikuneka yachisoni, “ukawafunse chifukwa chimene amalumphira ngati gwape pagulu paja ndi imvi zadzaza m’mutu mwawo zija. Chaka chatha anagona pamphasa kwa masiku angapo atangomaliza kuchita mwambo umenewu.”

“Kodi mumadziwa,” anafunsa Akueke akuyang’ana mochenjera kuti aone ngati pafupi panali mwamuna aliye-nse, koma panalibe. Ngakhale zinali choncho, anayankhula zimenezi motsitsa kwambiri, “Kodi mumadziwa kuti bambo aja ali mnyamata ankathamanga Ogbazulobodo ngati mmene Obika amachitira masiku ano?”

“Ndi anthu ake inuyo, makamaka awirinu, omwe mumachititsa kuti azichita zinthu zosokonekerazi. Iwo ajatu amaganiza kuti ali ndi mphamvu kuposa anyamata ndipo inuyo mumawatama.”

“Akanakhala kuti ndi bambo anga ndikanawauza maganizo anga momasuka.”

“Nanga mesa inuyo ndi amuna anu!” anatero Adeze. “Ngati atamwalira lero, kodi si inuyo amene mungamabindikire m’khitchini n’kumadzithira phulusa kwa misika isanu ndi iwiri? Pakati pa inuyo ndi ineyo, ndi ndani amene angavale ziguduli kwa chaka chathunthu? Mukawauze m’ malo moti muzibisalira kumbuyo kwa ine. Nanunsotu musandiyankhulitse pambali apa!”

“Kodi ndinakuuzani?” anatero Akueke akusintha nkhani inkalowera kowawasayi. “Mwamuna wanga komanso anthu akwawotu anabwera kudzapepesa.”

“Wati anabwera kudzatani?”

“Anabwera kudzapepesa.”

“Kuterokotu anatopa ndi kudikira. Koma afisi amene aja! Ndikuganiza kuti amadikira kuti utenge uchema n’kupita kwawoko n’kumakawanyambita mapazi komanso kumakawapembedzera ngati milungu.”

“Musawanyoze choncho akwawo kwa mwamuna wanga. Apo bii tigwiranapo,” anatero Akueke akunamizira kukwiya.

“Chonde ndikhululukireni chemwali. Sindimadziwa kuti mwakhululukirana kale. Pajatu zam’banja sizifunika kumazilowera. Ukazitengera pam’gong’o umapezeka kuti wangopusa nazo, eni ake atagwirizananso. Ndiye mubwerera liti kwa mwamuna wanuyo?”

“Msika wotsatira, pa tsiku la *Oye*.”

7

Nsewu watsopano womwe Wright ankapanga kuchokera ku Okperi kukafika ku Umuaro, unali ukupita kumalecheleche tsopano. Ngakhale zinali choncho, ntchitoyo inali yaikulu zedi moti sikanatha pa nthawi yake. Izi zikanachitika ngati akanapitiriza kulima nsewuwo pogwiritsa ntchito aganyu. Iye ankafuna kuwonjezera chiwerengero cha gulu la anthulo koma Kaputeni Winterbottom anamuzaza kuti zimenezo ndi zosatheka chifukwa ntchitoyo inali itawononga kale ndalama zoposa zomwe anagwirizana. Wright anayesa kuchepetsa ndalama zomwe ankalipira anthu ogwira ntchitowo kuchokera pa 3 pensi patsiku kufika pa 2 pensi. Koma sikuti kuchita zimenezi kukanawonjezera chiwerengero cha ogwira ntchitowo kwambiri. Ngakhale akanachepetsa ndalama zomwe ankawalipirazo ndi theka kapena akanayamba kuwapanikiza kwambiri, sikuti zinthu sizikanasinthabe. Wright anali atazolowerana ndi gulu la ogwira ntchitowo moti ankadziwa ngakhale maina a atsogoleri awo. Ambiri mwa anthuwa anali amanjalande ndipo ankagwira ntchitoyo pokhapokha wina akamawayang'anira. Koma ukawatenga bwino ankayamba kuchita zolongosoka. Ankangokhala ngati galu woweta yemwe amagwedezero mchira munthu amene amamupatsa chakudya ndipo luso lawo lopeka nyimbo linali lochititsa chidwi zedi. Kungochokera pamene anayamba kugwira ntchito patsiku loyamba n'kuuzidwa mmene

azilipidwira, anapeka nyimbo ya pogwira ntchito. Mtso-goleri wawo ankaimba kuti: “*Lebula toro toro*” ndipo ena onse ankayankha m’Chingerezi kuti “*A day*,” ndipo nthawi yomweyo ankayamba kuyendetsa zikwanje komanso makasu awo m’mwamba. Nyimbo imeneyi inkachititsa kuti ndime iyende ndipo anaiimba kwa masiku ambiri-mbiri.

*“Lebula toro toro
A day
Lebula toro toro
A day”*

Wright ankapeza njira yomwe ikanathandiza kuti nsewuwo uthe mwezi wa Juni usanafike. Iye ankafuna kuti anthuwo ayambe kugwira ntchito ya thangata. Koma anapempha kaye chilolezo chochitira zimenezi. Kaputeni Winterbottom ataiunika bwinobwino nkhaniyo, anapereka chilolezocho. M’kalata yake yovomereza ganizolo, Winterbottom anauza Wright kuti akhoza kugwiritsa ntchito njira imeneyo zinthu zikafika povuta kwambiri . . . “Anthu am’mudzi sangalole kugwira ntchito yaulele ngati atadziwa kuti amene akuwalemba ntchitoyo ali ndi ndalama zoti akhoza kuwalipira.”

Wright anabwera kunyumba zaboma ku Okperi kuchokera kukampu yokonza nsewu watsopanowo, womwe unali pamtunda wamamailosi asanu. Iye anayang’ana kalata yomwe anapatsidwayo mosamala kwambiri, kenako anaipinda n’kuilongedza m’thumba la kabudula wake wakhaki. Nayenso anali m’gulu la anthu omwe ankati akauzidwa zochita ankangovomera mwamphamvu ndi pakamwa pawo, koma akachoka pamenepo ankachita zosemphana kotheratu ndi zimene auzidwa.

Pamene atsogoleri a ku Umuaro anauzidwa kuti akufunika kupereka anthu oti azikagwira ntchito yolima nsewuwo, anapanga chimsonkhano ndipo anagwirizana zoti atumize magulu awiri a anyamata amphamvu kuti azikagwira ntchito: Gulu la anthu omwe anali ndi zaka zochulukirapo linkadzitchula kuti Otakagu, ndipo gulu la anthu achichepereko linkatchedwa Omumawa.

Magulu awiriwa sankamwerana madzi akamagwira ntchito limodzi. Ankangokhala ngati anyamata opondana ndipo nthawi zonse ankangokhalira kulumana. Zikuoneka kuti gulu la akuluakulu lija litafika pa nsinkhuwu linatenga dzina la Otakagu lomwe limatanthauza *akambuku*. Koma anzawowo atafikanso pa nsinkhu womwewo, anawapatsa dzina lakuti Omumawa, kutanthauza *nthumbidwa zovala matewera okhala ngati ukonde* ndipo izi zinawakwiyitsa kwambiri. Amenewa anali mawu achipongwe kwambiri moti anachititsa kuti gulu la achichepere lija livutike kupeza dzina lina labwino.

Chifukwa cha zimenezi, anayamba kusungira anawowo chakukhosi ndipo magulu awiriwa akakumana panakhala moto woopsa. Iwo ankayesetsa kuti asamakumane kulikonse. Sankafunanso kuti azikagwirira limodzi ntchito popanga nsewu wa azungu uja. Mwamwayi, Wright anangopempha kuti ku Umuaro kuzichoka anthu oti azikagwira ntchito masiku awiri pa mlungu. Choncho magulu awiriwa anagwirizana kuti azigwira ntchito masiku osiyana. Pa nthawi imeneyi mzunguyo ankangolipira anthu omwe anawalemba ganyu moyambirira aja ndipo anthuwa anawaika kukhala akapitawo oyang'anira anthu opanda khalidwe omwe ankabwera kudzagwira ntchito yathangata kuchokera ku Umuaro.

Ngakhale anali wamkulu kuposa aliyense m'magulu awiriwa, Moses Unachukwu, yemwenso anali kalipe-

ntala, ankadziwako kachingerezi ndipo ankabwera kumalo olima nsewuwo n'kumalinganiza magulu awiriwa. Iye ankatenga mawu omwe atuluka pakamwa pa mzungu uja n'kuwasungunula kuti anthu amtundu wake atolepo kanthu. Poyamba, Wright sankakhulupirira Moses ngakhale pang'ono ndipo umu ndi mmene ankachitira ndi munthu aliyense wakuda yemwe ankachita zinthu mochangamuka. Koma kenako anaona kuti akhoza kumugwiritsa ntchito ndipo anakonza zoti adzamupatse chiwongoladzanja ntchito yolima nsewuyo ikadzatha.

Posakhalitsa mbiri ya Unachukwu inatumphuka mpaka m'mitambo. Pa nthawiyo inali nkhani ina kumana kuti umatha kuyankhula chinenero cha azungu, koma inalinso nkhani ina kuyankhuladi chinenenerochi. Posakhalitsa anthu anayamba kumuthyolera katsatsa Unachukwu chifukwa cha luso lake lomvana ndi munthu wakungu loyera. Nkhaniyi inadya moto m'midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaru. Kubuka kwa Unachukwu kunamubaya pamoyo Ezeulu chifukwa sankafuna kuona munthu wina wa ku Umunneora akupikisana naye pa nkhani yokhala munthu wodziwika. Koma iye ankaganiza kuti sipatenga nthawi kuti mwana wake yemwe ankaphunzira njira za azungu ayambe kupatsidwa ulemu wofananawo, mwinanso kuposa pamenepo.

Tsopano inafika nthawi yoti gulu la Otakagu likagwire ntchito yolima nsewuwo. Gululi linkafunika kugawira ntchitoyi tsiku lotsatira pambuyo pa Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chija. Obika komanso mnzake waponda apo mpondapo, Ofodu, anali m'gulu limeneli.

Koma tsikuli lisanafike, anthu awiriwa anawutunga uchema moti analedzera n'kugona mpaka dzuwa kukwera. Obika anafika kwawo chakum'bandakucha ndipo sanadzuke ngakhale mayi komanso mlongo wake anayesetsa

kumudzutsa.

Obika ndi Ofoedu analedzera pambuyo pa Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani limodzi ndi anthu atatu ankacheza nawo aja. Anthuwa ankatsutsana kuti ndi mowa wochuluka bwanji womwe munthu wamutu wabwino angamwe popanda kusiya kuganiza bwinobwino kapena kuiwala dzina lake.

“Zimadalira mtengo komanso munthu yemwe wifulula uchemawo,” anatero m’modzi mwa iwo.

“Inde,” anavomerezanso mnzake wina dzina lake Maduka. “Zimenezo ndi zoona.”

“Ayi, nkhani si imeneyo. Zimadalira mutu wa munthu. Ngati munthu ali ndi mutu wapulasitiki amatha kuyamba kumva kulemera zovala zake zomwe ndipo amachotsa zonse n’kukafika nazo kwawo zili m’manja. Koma mitu ya enafe ndi mwalamwala. Mukhoza kubweretsa uchema wofululidwa mumtengo uliwonse mu Umuaro muno komanso kugwiritsa ntchito wofulula aliyense,” anatero Ofoedu, “koma ife tikhoza kugagadiza uchemawo mpaka mimba kukhuta ngu, kenako n’kunyamuka kumapita kwathu m’maso mukadayera.”

Obika anavomerezana ndi mnzakeyo. “N’zoona kuti mitengo ina ndi yaukali kwambiri komanso kuti pali akatswiri ena omwe amati akatcheza mowa umaluma ngati njoka. Komabe ndimaona kuti munthu wa mutu wabwino akhoza kumwa mowa uliwonse nzeru osamuchokera.”

“Kodi munamvapo za mtengo wa Okposalebo?”

Obika ndi Ofoedu anapukusa mitu.

“Munthu aliyense amene amadzitchula kuti iyeyo ndi chilombo cha mowa, koma sanamvepo za Okposalebo amakhala akudzinamiza.”

“Zimene akunena Madukazi ndi zoona,” anatero m’modzi mwa anthu aja. “Uchema wopangidwa kucho-

kera kumtengo umenewo samagulitsidwa pamsika, ndipo palibe munthu amene angamwe nyanga ziwiri zodzaza bwino n’kukwanitsa kulondola njira yakwawo.”

“Mtengo umenewu ndi wakale kwambiri. Umatche-dwanso kuti *Chikwanje cha Chibale* chifukwa anthu apachibale akamwa nyanga ziwiri zokha amatha kuyamba kung’ambana ngati sadziwana.”

“Basi nkhani imeneyo isiyeni, yambani ina,” anatero Obika akupungulira uchema m’nyanga yake. “Ngati mutatiuza kuti wotcheza uchemawo amatsiramo mankhwala, imeneyo ikhoza kukhala nkhani ina. Koma ngati umatchezedwa kuchokera kumtengo basi, ndiye khalani chete musatisokose.”

Kenako Maduka anawomba mkota. “Sitingapindule kanthu kumakangana ndi inu za nkhani imeneyi. Si kuti mtengowo uli kudziko lakutali. Uli kwathu konkuno. Ti-yeni tipite kunyumba kwa Nwokafo tikamuuze kuti atipatse mtsuko wodzaza ndi uchema wochokera mumtengo umenewo. Koma choti mudziwe n’choti umadula ngati nsalu yabafuta. Chikho chimodzi amapanga *ego-nese*, koma musadandaule ndikalipira ndi ineyo. Ngati awirinu mutakamwa nyanga zitatu zodzaza bwino n’kulondolabe njira yakwanu, ndiye kuti ndinu amunamuna. Koma mukakangodziipitsira m’kabudula, mudzandipatsa *ego-neli* mowawo ukangokuchokani m’mutu.”

Koma mowawo utamwedwa, zinachitikadi mogwirizana ndi zimene Maduka ananena. Anyamata awiri amatamawa anagona pomwe anakhala atangomaliza kumwa mowawo. Pamene kunja kunkada Maduka anawasiya pomwepo n’kukalowa m’nyumba mwake. Usiku umenewo anatuluka kawiri koma anawapezabe adakali tapatapa.

Koma atadzuka m’mawa, anawapeza atapita.

Iye ankalakalaka akanawaona pamene amanyamu-

ka. Chomwe chinamusangalatsa n'choti anyamatawo anatengetapo phunziro kuti aziganiza kaye asatsegule pakamwa pawo ena akamawauza za mowa wangati zitsulo.

Ofoedu ankaoneka kuti mowa uja sunamupereke kwambiri ngati Obika. Pamene ankadzuka n'kupeza kuti dzuwa lakwera kale, anathamangira kunyumba kwa Ezeulu kuti akamudzutse Obika. Koma ngakhale anayesetsa kumugunyuzwa, Obika sanatsegule maso ake. Kenako Ofoedu anatunga madzi ozizira m'chikho n'kumukapiza mnzakeyo ndipo anadzuka. Anthu awiriwa anauyambapo wopita kukagwira ntchito yolima nsewu limodzi ndi anawo. Pamene ankachoka pakhomopa, ankangokhala ngati zinyawu zomwe zavulidwa dzuwa likuswa mtengo.

Ezeulu anali akugonabe mu *obi* wake chifukwa cha kuphwanja kwa thupi komwe kunayamba atathamanga kwambiri pa chikondwerero chija. Iye anadzidzimuka ndi phokoso lomwe linkamveka kuseri. Anafunsa Nwafo kuti anthuwo akukuwa chiyani ndipo Nwafo anawauza kuti amadzutsa Obika. Ezeulu sananene kanthu ndipo anangoyamba kukukuta mano ake mwaphokoso zedi. Iye ankaona kuti khalidwe la mwana wakeyu ndi lolemera kuposa chintolo chankhuni.

Ezeulu ankaganiza kuti pakadutsa masiku angapo, mkazi wa Obika abwera. Mkaziyu akanakhala atabwera kale zikanakhala kuti mayi ake sankamva kutsinatsina m'thupi. Koma Ezeulu ankadzifunsa kuti: “Koma zoonamkaziyo akadzabwera adzapeze chitsipetsipe cha mwamuna ngati chimenechi, mwamuna yemwe sangathe kuyang'anira nyumba yake komanso kuteteza mkazi wake usiku kutabwera amaliwongo, mwamuna yemwe amachita kudzutsidwa ndi azimayi m'mawa kukacha?” Iye ankaona kuti munthu wochita zimenezi si mwamuna weniweni ndipo ankada kukhosi kwambiri akaona amuna oopera

omwe amangokhala ndungundu n’kumadzikanda kwinaku atapindidza miyendo yawo ngati akazi.

Tufia! Analavulira pansi wansembe wachikulireyo. Iye sakanakwanitsa kupirira chonyansa changati chime-necho, makamaka chikuchitidwa ndi mwana wake weni-weni.

Ngakhale kuti Ezeulu sanafunse zambiri za nkhaniyi, ankadziwa kuti mwana wakeyo anali limodzi ndi Ofoedu. Ezeulu ankanena mobwerezabwereza kuti Ofoedu alibe umunthu ngakhale pang’ono. Zaka ziwiri zinali zisanathe kungochokera pamene anadutsa m’mudzi wonse akukuwa kuti nyumba ya bambo ake ikupsa. Koma anthu atafufuza anazindikira kuti ankangowabwatika. Chifukwa cha kusaganiza bwino kwakeku, bambo ake omwe anali osauka ndi mano omwe, analipira chindapusa chambuzi imodzi. Ezeulu anauza Obika maulendo ambirimbi kuti munthu amene akufuna kuchita zinthu zaphindu ndi moyo wake, sangakhale paubwenzi ndi munthu wamtundu umenewu. Koma zimenezi zinkangolowera khutu limodzi n’kutululira linalo. Unkhutukumve umenewu unkatsimikizira Ezeulu kuti palibe chimene adzaphulepo pa mavuto onse omwe anamusautsa polera mwanayu.

Pamene mabwenzi awiriwa ankanyamuka n’kumapita kokagwira ntchito kuja, ankangoyenda mwakachete-chete. Mutu wa Obika unali utachita dzanzi ndipo paliwombombo pake pankapepuka ngati pachita dazi. Mutuwo unkanngokhala ngati si wake, koma kuyendako kunamuthandiza abwereremo. Pamene ankalowa m’kanjira kena kakang’ono, komwe kanali kakale kwambiri, anayamba kuona nsewu watsopano uja. Nsewuwo unkangooneka ngati kuwala kwa m’bandakucha.

“Kodi ukuganiza bwanji za katundu anatipatsa Maduka uja?” anafunsa Ofoedu. Kameneka kanali koyamba

kukambirana zomwe zinachitika tsiku lapita lija. Obika sanayankhe chilichonse. Iye anangodzuma mokhala ngati ali pakatikati pa kumva bwino ndi kudandaula.

“Umene uja sunali uchema ndimaudziwa inewu. Ayenera anathiramo zinazake,” anatero Ofoedu. “N’ku-theka kuti amaikamo mankhwala enaake amphamvu. Ndi-kaganizira nkhanayi ndikuona kuti tinalakwitsa kwambiri kutsatira munthu woopsa ngati amene uja kunyumba kwake. Kodi ukukumbukira kuti iye uja sanamwe ngakha-le nyanga imodzi?”

Obika sanamuyankhe.

“Ngati ndingamupatse ndalama ya *ego-neli* amana ija undikolowole diso langali.”

“Kodi umaganiza kuti timulipira?” Obika anamuyang’ana modabwa. “Ine ndikuona kuti chilichonse chimene tinanena dzulo lija tinanena chifukwa cha kuledzera.”

Kenako anafika munsewu watsopano uja. Munthu akafika munsewuwu ankadzimva ngati wasokonekera, monga chimachitira chimanga chimodzi chikagwera m’thumba lachikopa chambuzi. Obika ananyamula chikwanje m’dzanja lake lamanzere, koma kenako anasintha mbali n’kuchigwira ndi dzanja lamanja. Popeza anali pamalo oonekera, anaona kuti akhale tcheru.

Chifukwa choti nsewuwo sunkapita kumtsinje kapena kumsika, Ofoedu ndi Obika sanakumane ndi anthu ambiri. Anangokumana ndi azimayi owerengeka atasenza mitolo ikuluikulu ya nkhu.

“Kodi n’chiyani chimene ndikumvacho?” anafunsa Obika.

Tsopano anali akuyandikira mtengo wokalama wa *egbu*. Anthu ankakhulupirira kuti pantengowu, mizimu ya usiku yotchedwa Onyekulum inkayamba ulendo wawo

ikuimba nyimbo komanso kunena miseche m'nyengo yomwe anthu amapuma akangomaliza kukolola.

“Nanensotu ndimafuna ndikufunse. Ikumveka ngati nyimbo yamaliro.” Pamene ankayandikira kumalo ogwirira ntchito panalibenso kukayika. Iwo ankamva nyimbo yachisoni yomwe anthu ankaimba akamapita kumanda kukaika maliro:

*“Taonani nsato!
Taonani nsato!
Nsato yagona pansewu.”*

Anthu awiriwa anaizindikira nyimboyo ndipo amene ankaimba anali anthu am'gulu lawo lija. Atangozindikira zimenezo, onse anayamba kuseka. Munthu wina anasintha nyimbo yamaliroyi n'kuisandutsa nyimbo yapogwira ntchito. Ofoedu ananena kuti akukhulupirira kuti amene wayambitsa nyimboyo ndi Nweke Ukpaka. Nweke anakonda kuchita zibwana komanso kuyambitsa macheza oipa ngati amenewa.

Kufika kwa Obika ndi Ofoedu kunachititsa kuti ogwira ntchito asiye kuimba komanso kukhapa mitengo kamodzin'kamodzi. Nawonso omwe anali werawera kuli ma ndi makasu anaweramuka n'kumawayang'ana, miyendo yawo idakali chitang'adzire, atatuwa mbu-u ngati mtedza wokazinga ndi mchere.

Nweke Ukpaka anayankhula mokweza kuti: “*Kwo kwo kwo!*” ndipo ena onse anayankha kuti: “*Kwo-o-o-oh oh!*” ndipo aliyense anayamba kuseka koopsa chifu kwa ankatengera zimene azimayi amanena akamathokoza munthu chifukwa choti wawapatsa chinachake.

Wright ataona zimenezo analusa koopsa. Iwo anagwira mwamphamvu kwambiri chikwapu chake chomwe

ankachikoleka palamba wake. Chipewa choteteza mutu chomwe anavala chinkamuonetsa kufupika ngati bathwa makamaka kuchokera pamene ananjuta. Moses Unachukwu ankamuyankhulitsa mosangalala kwambiri koma ankaoneka kuti sankamumvetsera.

Wright ankawayang'ana ndi diso lachiweruzo anyamata anabwera mochedwawa. Ena aja anangoimaima n'kumayang'ana kuti chitachitike n'chiyani. Ngakhale kuti mzunguyu ankayenda ndi chikwapu nthawi zonse, sankachigwiritsa ntchito kawirikawiri pomenyera anthu ndipo akachita zimenezi, ankachita zinthu ngati akungopanga zocheza. Koma m'mawa umenewu zikuoneka kuti nayeonso anadzukira kumanzere.

Obika ataona mzunguyo, yemwe anali wouma thupi kwambiri, anawonjezera moto n'kuyamba kuyenda monjanja kwambiri. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anyamata ena aja ayambe kuseka. Kenako Obika anadutsa Wright yemwe analephera kuugwira mtima chifukwa cha kudzipopa kwa mnyamata wosasambayo. Iye anamukwapula mwamphamvu ndi chikwapu chija. Kenako anachiulutsanso ndipo ulendo uno chinafikira pakhutu la Obika. Ululu umene anamva pamenepo unachititsa kuti nayenso afuke utsi. Nthawi yomweyo anataya pansi chikwanje chake n'kufufuma ngati mphiri. Mwamwayi, Moses Unachukwu anathamanga n'kukaima pakati pa awiriwo. Anthu ena omwe ankathandizira Wright poyang'anira anyamatawo anagwira mwansanga Obika ndipo anamukwapulanso zikwapu zina zingapo n'kulemba msana wake womwe unali pamtunda. Pamene zikwapuzo zinkatera pathupi lake, Obika sanachite matukutuku ngakhale pang'ono. Iye ankangooneka ngati nkhusa yomwe ikukusidwa kuti ikaphedwe. Ofoedu nayenso ankangonjenjemera ndipo ulelendo uno, komwe kanali koyamba pamoyo wake, anka-

ngoongerera mnzake akumenyedwa, koma osalowerera.

“Kodi wachita misala kuti ufike pofuna kumenyana ndi mzungu?” anakuwa Moses Unachukwu modabwa kwambiri. “Zikuonekadi kuti zimene ndinamva zoti kwanu kulibe munthu wamutu wabwinobwino ndi zoonu.”

“Kodi wayamba kunyoza anthu am’mudzi wakwathu eti?” anafunsa munthu wina yemwe ankachokera m’mudzi wofanana ndi Obika yemwe anazindikira kuti zimene Unachukwu ananena zinkasonyeza udani pakati pa mudzi wa Umuachala ndi Umunneora.

Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti pagulu lija pakhale chipwirikiti. Posakhalitsa anyamata am’midzi iwiriya anayamba kuthupsana moti panali kulozanalozana zala mpaka kufika pofuna kutosana m’maso. Zinali zophweka kuthana ndi mkangano umenewu kusiyana ndi womwe unali utangochitika uja.

“Takhalani chete abulutu inu ndipo bwererani kuntchito yanu pompano!” analamula Wright.

Wright anali ndi mawu okandapala ndipo ankamveka patali kwambiri. Atangonena mawu amenewa anthu aja anasiya kukangana. Kenako anatembenukira kwa Unachukwu n’kunena kuti: “Uwauze kuti sindiwanyengerera akamachita zaulesi.”

Unachukwu anamasulira zimene Wright ananena.

“Uwauzenso kuti ntchitoyi ikufunika ikhale itatha usanafike mwezi wa Juni.”

“Mzunguyu akuti mukangopanda kumaliza ntchitoyi pa nthawi yake mudziwanso.” Anamasulira mophotcholera Unachukwu, koma utambwali wakewu sunapite patali.

“Ngati mukufuna tigwirizane, pasapezenenso munthu wobwera mochedwa kuntchito kuno.”

“Pang’ono kaye bwana.”

“Pang’ono chiyani? Zoonu ukulephera kumva Chingezezi chophweka ngati chimenechi? Ndanena kuti pasapezekenso munthu wobwera mochedwa kuntchito kuno.”

“Oho. Wanena kuti aliyense ayenera kugwira ntchito molimbika komanso kuti musiye kuchita zamisala zanzuzi.”

“Ndili ndi funso lomwe ndikufuna mzunguyu ayanke,” anatero Nweke Ukpaka.

“Funso lake lotani?”

Unachukwu anakayikira pang’ono ndipo kenako anayamba kukanda mutu wake.

“Dat man wan axe master qeshon (Bwana, uyu akuti ali ndi funso),” anabolobosha chizungu Unachukwu.

“Palibe akuloledwa kufunsa funso.”

“Yessah.” Kenako anatembenukira kwa Nweke. “Mzunguyu wanena kuti sanachoke kwawo kuti azidzayankha mafunso anu opanda ncherewo.”

Anthu aja anayamba kudzuma. Kenako Wright anakuwana n’kuuza anthuwo kuti ngati sabwerera kuntchito yawo awakhaulitsa.

Palibe amene anamasulira mawu amenewa. Zomwe ankatanthauza zinali zoonekeratu pa nkhope yake moti palibe anafunsanso. Kenako zikwanje zija zinayambanso kugwira ntchito yake ndipo amene ankagwiritsa ntchito makasu anawerama n’kuyamba kulima. Koma pamene ankagwira ntchitoyi, anayamba kupangana zoti achite.

Koma zimenezi zinavuta pang’ono. Iwo ankasiyana maganizo pa nkhani ya Moses Unachukwu. Ambiri omwe ankachokera ku Umuachala ankaona kuti palibe chifukwa choti munthu wamkulu kwambiri ngati ameneyo akhalepo akamakambirana nkhaniyo. Pomwe ena ankanena kuti ayenera kukhalapo chifukwa makambiranowo anali okhudza mzunguyo ndiye kunali kusaganiza bwino kuti asalole

Moses yemwe anali m'bale wawo kukhalapo chifukwa iyeyo ndi amene ankadziwa bwino njira za mzunguyo. Panthawi imeneyi Ofoedu anaimirira ndipo n'zodabwitsa kuti ananena kuti akufuna Unachukwu akhalepo.

“Koma cholinga changa ndi china,” anawonjezera motero Ofoedu. “Ndikufuna atiuze zonse zimene wamaliza mzunguyu zokhudza kwawo kwa Obika. Ndikufunanso kuti atiuze tonse ngati zili zoonza kuti anauza mzunguyu kuti akwapule mnzathuyu. Akapereka mayankho a mafunso amenewa akhoza kumapita. Mukandifunsa chifukwa chake akufunika kumapita, ndikhoza kukuuzani. Makambiranowa ndi a anthu am'gulu la Otakagu. Iye uja ali m'gulu la anthu akuluakulu la Akakanma. Komanso mwina ndikukumbutseni, makamaka enanu omwe mukunong'onanong'ona n'kumandisokoneza ndikuyankhula, kuti munthu ameneyu ali m'chipembedzo cha azungu. Kungoti sindikufuna kukoka nkhani imeneyi pano.”

“Chomwe ndikufuna ndi choti Unachukwu ayankhe mafunso amene ndafunsawa. Akamaliza akhoza kumapita ndipo achokere limodzi ndi nzeru za azungu akewo. Tonse takhala tikumva nkhani zambirimбири zokhudza mmene amagwiritsira ntchito nzeru zimenezi. Takhala tikumva kuti akachoka ku Umuaro kuno amapita kwawo n'kumakaphika ngati mzimayi komanso kumakasetekera mbale . . .”

Kenako zonena zonse za Ofoedu zinamizidwa ndi phokoso lomwe linabuka pamenepo. Ambiri ankanena kuti Ofoedu angachite bwino kuti angonena momasuka zimene amafuna kunenazo osasinira mawu. Ena ankanena kuti wayankhula chilungamo. Komabe, panatenga nthawi kuti bata libwererenso. Moses Unachukwu ankayankhula zinazake koma sanamvedwe, kufikira pamene phokosolo linachepa. Pamene anthu ankayamba kumumvetsera, ma-

wu ake anali atakwera kwambiri.

“Ngati simukufuna kuti ndikhale pano, ndikhoza kunyamuka.”

“Nanunso musanyanyale!”

“Tikhoza kukulolani kuti mukhalepo.”

“Koma ndikapita, sindiyerekezanso kukuikirani kumbuyo galu wachiweweyo akamafunanso kukukhadzulani. Munthu ameneyu ndi wolusa ngati chilombo chakutchire, ndipo ndi wolimba mtima moti sangalire ngakhale bambo ake atamwalira. Ndiye mukuganiza kuti ndi ndani amene atakutetezeni akayambanso kukutukwanani . . .”

“Basi pakwana.”

“Sitinabwere pano kuti tidzichotsere ulemu.”

Pamene zokambiranazo zinkayamba, wina ananena kuti angopita kwa madoda a ku Umuaro n’kukawauza kuti sangakwanitsenso kugwira ntchito yolambula nsewu wa mzunguyo. Koma pamene ena omwe anayankhula pambuyo pake ankanena mavuto amene angabwere ndi zime-nezo, anaona kuti sangachite bwino kutsatira ganizo lime-nelo. Unachukwu ananena kuti ngati zimenezo zitachitikadi, ndiye kuti mzunguyo akagwira madoda onse a ku Umuaro n’kukawatsekera m’ndende ku Okperi.

“Nokhanso mukudziwa ubale wosamwerana madzi umene ulipo pakati pa Umuaro ndi Okperi. Kodi mukuganiza kuti munthu wa ku Umuaro angapite kundende ya ku Okperi n’kubwerako wamoyo? Komanso musaiwaletu kuti mwezi uno ndi wobzala mbewu. Kodi mukufuna kuti mbewu za chaka chino mukazibzale makolo anu ali kundende? Ndikunena izi ngati mkulu wanu. Ine ndinapita ku Olu ndipo ndinapitanso kudziko la Igbo, koma ndingakuuzeni pano kuti palibe munthu amene angathawe mzungu. Iye wabwera kwatha, ndipo wamera mizu kuno. Mavuto akabwera pakhomu pako umawauza kuti, ‘Mavuto

inetu ndilibe mpando woti mukhalire,’ koma mavutowo amakuuza kuti, ‘Usadandaule ndi zimenezo, ndabwera nawo wanga.’ Mzungunso ali choncho. Nonsenu mudakali ana omangoyenda osavala, ine ndinaona ndi maso angawa zimene azungu anachita ku Abame. Pamenepo m’pamene ndinadziwa kuti palibe kothawira. Mofanana ndi mmene kuwala kumathamangitsira mdima, azunguwa akufuna kuthamangitsa zikhalidwe zathu zonse. Ndikudziwa kuti enanu zimene ndikukambazi zikukunyansani, koma ingo-dikirani muone. Azungu ali ndi mphamvu zochokera kwa Mulungu woona ndipo zimayaka ngati moto. Ameneyu ndi Mulungu amene timalalikira pa tsiku la khumi ndi chitatu lililonse . . .”

Anthu odana ndi Unachukwu anayamba kukuwa kuti umenewo unali msonkhano wa gulu lawo ndipo samayenera kumamumvetsera akufesa mbewu za chipembedzo chake chosadziwika bwinocho.

“Pano tikukambirana za nsewu wa mzunguyu,” anatero wina ndi mawu amphamvu kuposa a ena onse.

“Inde tikukamba za nsewu wa mzungu. Komatu khoma la nyumba likagwa, denga lakenso limagwera limodzi. Mzungu, chipembedzo chatsopano, asilikali komanso nsewu watsopano—zonse zikuchokera pa chinthu chimodzi. Azungu ali ndi mfuti, zikwanje, mauta komanso amanyamula moto mkamwa mwawo. Ndi ochenjera kwamбири moti samamenya nkhondo ndi chida chimodzi chokha.”

Nweke Ukpaka ndi amene kenako anayankhula. “Chinthu chimene munthu sachidziwa chimakhala champhamvu kuposa iyeyo. Anthu tonse amene timanena kuti Unachukwu azipita tinaiwala kuti palibe aliyense amene angakwanitse kunena liwu ndi limodzi lomwe m’chineronero cha mzunguyu. Choncho tiyenera kumvera mala-

ngizo a Unachukwu. Ngati titapita kwa akuluakulu athu n’kukawauza kuti sitikufunanso kugwira ntchito yokonza nsewuwu, kodi tikuyembekezera kuti akachita chiyani? Kodi tikufuna kuti makolo athu atenge makasu komanso zikwanje n’kubwera kumadzagwira ntchitoyi ifeyo tita-ngokhala ndu-u kunyumba? Ndikudziwa kuti ambiri a ife tikufuna kumenyana ndi mzunguyu. Koma ndikuuzeni, ndi munthu wopanda nzeru yekha amene amapita kuka-limbana ndi mkango alibe chida. Mzungu ali ngati nsuzi wotentha, nsuzi wotentha timaumwa pang’onopang’ono kudzera m’milomo ya mbale yathu. Sufuna phuma ayi. Umuaro analipo mzunguyu asanabwere kuno kuchokera kwawo ndipo anatipeza tili phe-e. Ife sitinachite kumu-pempha kuti abwere kuno; komanso iye si m’bale wathu kapena mpongozi wathu. Ife sitinamubere mbuzi kapena nkhuu yake ndiponso sitinatenge malo ake kapena mkazi wake. Kunena zoonza palibe choipa chilichonse chimene tinamuchitira. Koma ngakhale zili choncho, iye anabwera kuno n’kumadzatitokosa pabala. Chomwe tikudziwa n’choti *oyo* wathu wanyamulidwa m’mwamba pakati pa ife ndi iyeyo. Mlendo samapha mwinyumba chifukwa choti wamuyendera; komanso ngati akufuna kubwerera kwawo, sikuti nsana wake ungatupe ayi. Ndikudziwa kuti mzunguyu sakufunira zabwino Umuaro. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake tikufunika kunyamula m’mwamba *oyo* wathu pamaso pake kuti tisamupatse chonena kuti aziti sitinachite zakutizakuti kapena tachita zakutizakuti. Chifukwa tikamupatsa chifukwa akhoza kusangalala. Zimenezi zingangokhala ngati nyumba imene amafuna kugwetsa yayaka yokha moto n’kupsa mpaka pansi. Pa chifukwa chimenechi ine ndikuona kuti tipitirizebe kugwira ntchitoyi. Ndipo tikamaliza tidzamufunsa ngati pali ntchito inanso imene akufuna kuti timugwirire. Ukamachita

zinthu ndi munthu yemwe amakuona ngati chitsiru, zimakhala bwino nthawi zina kumukumbutsa kuti umadziwa zimene akuganiza koma kuti wangosankha kukhala ngati chitsiru kuti pakhale mtendere. Mzunguyu amaganiza kuti ndife zitsiru; ndiye m'pofunika timufunse funso limodzi. Limeneli ndi funso limene ndimafuna kumufunsa koma kungoti samafuna kumvetsera. Tili ndi mwambi womwe umanena kuti munthu akhoza kukana kuchita zimene wauzidwa, koma sayenera kukana kufunsidwa mafunso. Koma zikuoneka kuti kwawo kwa mzunguyu kulibe mwambi ngati umenewu. Ndakhala ndikumva kuti ku Olu komanso ku Igbo konse, munthu aliyense amene akumagwira ntchito ngati imeneyi akumalipidwa. Ndiye n'chifukwa chiyani ifeyo sakutilipira?"

Ukpaka anali munthu wodziwa kuyankhula ndipo atamaliza kuyankhulako palibenso amene ananena zowonjezera. Pamapeto pa makambirano awowa anapanga chosankha chimodzi. Gulu la Otakagu linapempha Unachukwu kuti afufuze nthawi yomwe ingakhale yabwino kuti afunse mzunguyo chifukwa chake sakumawalipira akagwira ntchito.

"Uthenga wanuwu ndikaufikitsa," anatero Unachukwu.

"Koma sikuti uthengawu wathera pomwepa," anatero Nwoye Udora. "Si zokwanira kungomufunsa chifukwa chake sakutilipira. Iyeyo akudziwa chifukwa chake, ndipo ifeyo tikudziwa chifukwa chake. Iye akudziwa kuti anthu amene akugwira ntchito yofananayi ku Okperi akumawapatsa ndalama. Choncho, funso limene ukamufunse ndi ili: *Anthu ena akumalipidwa akagwira ntchitoyi, ndiye n'chifukwa chiyani ifeyo sitikulipidwa? Kapena ntchito yathuyi ndi yosiyana ndi imene akumagwira?* N'zofunika kwambiri kumufunsa ngati ntchito yathuyi ili yosiyana ndi

ya enawo.”

Onse anagwirizana nazo ndipo msonkhanowu unathera pomwepo.

“Mawu unanena aja ndi anzeru kwambiri,” wina anauza Nwoye Udora pamene ankachoka pa zokambiranazo. “Mwina mzunguyo atiuza ngati tinayamba taphapo bambo ake kapena mayi ake.”

Nkhani yoti mzungu uja anawumbudza Obika inafala m’midzi yonse. Nkhaniyi inafika kunyumba kwa Ezeulu ndi mkazi wa Edogo yemwe ankachokera kunkhalango atasenza mtolo wake wankhuni. Ezeulu anadzidzimuka kutulo take atamva mayi a Obika ndi mlongo wake akulira. Iye anaponyera pansi chofunda chake ndipo anadzuka nsangansanga. Maganizo ake ankathamanga moo-psa moti akanatha kuchita ngozi. Koma kenako anamva mkazi wa Edogo akuyankhula, zomwe sizikanachitika zikanakhala kuti winawake wafa. Pamenepo anakhala m’mbali mwa kama wake ndipo anayamba kuitana mkazi wa Edogo mokweza. Posakhalitsa Amoge analowa mu *obi* ali limodzi ndi mwamuna wake yemwe ankasema chitseko chamtengo wa *iroko* cha munthu wina wampando waukulu pa nthawi yomwe mkazi wake ankabwera kuchokera kotola nkhu.

“Mwati chachitika n’chiyani?” Ezeulu anafunsa Amoge.

Iye anabwerezanso nkhani yomwe anamvayo.

“Anamukwapula?” anafunsa Ezeulu akuoneka kuti sakumvetsa. “Ndiye amati walakwa chiyani?”

“Anthu amene anandiuza nkhaniyi sananene chime ne analakwa.”

Nkhope ya Ezeulu inapotoka ndi maganizo. “Ndikuganiza kuti anapita mochedwa. Koma mzunguyo sakanakwapula munthu wamkulu ngati ameneyu yemwenso

ndi mwana wanga. Iye akanangomuuza kuti apereke chindapusa kugulu lakelo chifukwa chopita mochedwa. Samayenera kumukwapula. Kapenatu iyeyo ndi amene anayamba kumumenya . . .”

Edogo anamva kuwawa kwambiri mumtima ndi nkhawa imene bambo akewo anali nayo koma sankafuna kuionetsa. Akaona bambo ake akuchita zimenezi zinkamuwawa kwambiri moti ankayamba kuchitira nsanje m’bale wakeyo.

“Ndikuganiza kuti ndipite ku *Nkwo* komwe akuchitira msonkhano wawo,” anatero Edogo. “Ineyo nkhanayi sindinaitolelebe.” Iye anabwerera kukhumbi lake n’kukutenga chikwanje ndipo kenako anauyamba ulendo wa ku *Nkwo*.

Bambo ake omwe ankaoneka kuti akuganizirabe nkhanayo anamuitana. Edogo atabwerera, bambo akewo anamuuza kuti asachite zinthu mopupuluma.

“Mmene ndikumudziwira mchimwene wako uja, n’kutheka kuti iyeyo ndi amene anayamba kumugwira m’thupi mzunguyo. Komansotu pamene amachoka kuno mowa unali uli m’mutu.” Mawu a Ezeulu anali atasinthiratu ndipo Edogo anangotsala pang’ono kuseka podabwa ndi zimene bambo akewo ankanena. Kenako Edogo ananyamukanso ndipo ulendo uno anangovala zovala zake zogwirira ntchito. Anavala nsalu yaitali yamizeremizere yomwe anaimanga m’chiwuno, ndipo mbali ina inkalendewera kutsogolo ndi kumbuyo kwake. “Basi Amoge ukhoza kubwerera kunyumba!” Anatero Edogo kwa mkaazi wake akulowa munsewu waung’ono wolowera chakumanzere.

Ezeulu tsopano anali atakhala pathabwa la *iroko* atatsamira khoma kuti aziona amene akubwera kuchokera kunsewu. Maganizo ake ankangoyendayenda n’kumayesa

kumvetsa nkhani ya kukwapulidwa kwa mwana wake ija. Tsopano anayamba kuganiza za mzungu yemwe anakwapula mwana wakeyo. Ezeulu anamuonapo komanso kumva mawu ake pamene ankafotokozera akuluakulu a Umuaro za nsewu watsopanowo. Pamene ankamva nkhani yakuti kukubwera mzungu kuti adzayankhule ndi akulua-kulu a Umuora, Ezeulu ankaganiza kuti ndi bwenzi lake lija, Wintabota, *Wowononga Mifuti*. Iye anakhumudwa kwambiri ataona kuti ndi mzungu wina.

Wintabota anali wamtali komanso wowongoka ndipo ankayenda monga munthu wolemekezeka. Mawu ake ankamveka ngati chiphaliwali. Koma mzungu winayu anali wamfupi komanso wojintcha, ndipo anali ndi bweya ngati nyani. Mzungu ameneyu akamayankhula sankatsegula bwinobwino pakamwa pake moti ankangokhala ngati akumva dzino. Ezeulu atangomuona anayamba kuganiza kuti ndi wantchito wa Wintabota.

Anthu ena anatulukira molunjika pakhomo pa Ezeulu mochokera pamphambano ya kanjira kakang'ono kaja. Iye anadzutsa mutu wake, koma anthuwo anangodutsa.

Ezeulu anatsimikiza mtima kuti ngati mwana wakeyo sanalakwe, apita yekha ku Okperi kukamuneneza mzunguyo kwa bwana wake. Maganizo akewa anadukiratu ataona Obika ndi Edogo akutulukira. Kumbuyo kwa awiriwa kunali munthu wina yemwe Ezeulu anamuzindikira kuti ndi Ofoedu. Ezeulu zinkamuvuta kuzolowera munthu wopanda pake ameneyu, yemwe ankangotsatira mwana wake ngati ntchentche. Ezeulu anamukwiwira kwambiri ndipo mkwiwowo unasefukira ndi kwa mwana wake yemweyo.

“Kodi anamukwapula chifukwa chiyani?” Ezeulu anafunsa Edogo, akukhala ngati sakuona awiri enawo. Mayi a Obika limodzi ndi anthu ena anathamangira ku *obi*

ya Ezeulu.

“Anapita mochedwa kuntchito.”

“N’chifukwa chiyani unachedwa?”

“Sindinabwere kunyumba kuno kudzayankha mafunso,” anatero Obika mokweza kwambiri.

“Zili ndi iweyo kuyankha kapena kusayankha. Koma ndikuuze lero kuti chimenechi ndi chiyambi cha mavuto amene utakumane nawo chifukwa cha mowa wako-wu. Pajatu chinthu chomwe chimapha munthu chimayamba ndi chilakolako.”

Obika ndi Ofoedu anangotuluka n’kumapita.

8

Edogo ankakhala pafupi kwambiri ndi bambo ake moti nyumba zawo zinkasiyanitsidwa ndi mpanda basi. Komabe pakhomu pa Edogo panali papang'ono chifukwa panali nyumba ziwiri zokha. Nyumba imodzi inali ya Edogo ndipo ina inali ya mkazi wake, Amoge. Iye sanafutukule kwambiri pakhomu pake chifukwa malinga ndi mwambo, mwana woyamba kubadwa ndi amene ankatenga nyumba ya bambo ake akamwalira monga cholowa. Choncho Edogo anamanga nyumba yakeyo ngati mongodikirira.

Chaposachedwa, nyumba zina ziwiri zinamangidwa chapafupi ndi pakhomu pa Ezeulu. Nyumba zimenezi zinali za mwana wake wamng'ono, Obika, ndi mkazi wake yemwe ankayembekezera kumukwatira. Komabe nyumbazi zinali zazikulu tikayerekezera ndi za Edogo ndi mkazi wake.

Munthu akamafika pakhomu pa Ezeulu kuchokera kunsewu waukulu, khomo la Edogo linali chakumanzere, pomwe khomo la Obika linali kumanja.

Obika ndi mnzake uja atangochoka, Edogo anapitanso pansu pa mtengo wa *ogbu* womwe unali kutsogolo kwa nyumba yake kuti akamalizitse kusema chitseko chija. Chitsekocho chinali chitatsala pang'ono kutha. Iye ankafuna kuti akamaliza kusema chitsekocho asiye kaye zosemasema n'kusumika maganizo ake onse pa nkhani yakumunda. Iye ankachitira nsanje akatswiri osemam-

nga Agwuegbo omwe minda yawo inkalimidwa ndi anthu omwe ankawaphunzitsa ntchito komanso makasitomala awo.

Pamene ankasema chitsekochi, maganizo ake anatembenukira kukhumbi la mkazi wake komwe mwana wawo ankalira. Mwanayo anali wamwamuna ndipo ume-newu unali uchembere wachiwiri. Mwana wawo woyamba anamwalira atangotha miyezi itatu yokha. Mwana amene anamwalirayo ankakhala ngati anabadwa kuti matenda adzapeze choseweretsa. Paliwombo pake panali pogangika ndipo matenda sanamupumitse mpaka pamene analowa m'manda. Koma wachiwiriya, Amechi, anali wosiyana kwambiri ndi woyambayo chifukwa pamene ankabadwa ankaoneka wathanzi. Koma patangotha miyezi isanu ndi umodzi, nayenso anasinthapo poyerayera. Mosadziwika bwino anayamba kukana bere ndipo khungu lake linkaoneka ngati masamba ofota a koko. Ena ankanena kuti mwina zimenezo zikuchitika chifukwa mkaka wam'mawere a Amoge wayamba kuwawa. Pomwe ena anamuza kuti aphinyire mkakawo m'mbale n'kuona ngati nyerere zingafe nawo. Koma kanyerere komwe kanagwera mumkakawo sikanafe ndipo anazindikira kuti vuto silinali mkaka.

Edogo ankasowa mtendere kwambiri ndi kudwala kwa mwana wakeyo. Anthu ena anali atayamba kale kunea kuti mwanayu si wosiyana ndi woyamba uja. Koma Edogo ndi Amoge sankanena chilichonse chokhudza nkhaniyi. Amoge ndiye sankayerekeza n'komwe kukamba za nkhaniyi chifukwa ankakhulupirira kwambiri kuti ufiti ndi mawu. Iye sankafuna kumakhala ngati akuloserazimfa ya mwana wakeyo.

Patsikuli, Amoge anakhala pankhaliyawira mwana wake ankalirayo atamuika pakati pa mapazi ake omwe

anaponda ndi zidendene. Patapita kanthawi pang'ono, Amoge anasuntha miyendo yake limodzi ndi mwana wake ndipo pamene anasunthapo panali bibi yamadzimadzi yooneka mobiriwira. Iye anaponya maso m'khumbimo kuti apeze chopukutira koma sanachipeze. Koma kenako anayamba kuoneka kuti wadziwa chochita moti anaitana kuti: *Nwanku! Nwanku! Nwanku!* Atangotero galu wakuda yemwe anali mafupa okhaokha anatulukira akuthamanga kuchokera panja ndipo anapita pomwe panali bibi paja n'kukayamba kunyambitapo mwaphokoso zedi. Pamene ankanyambita ulendo wachinayi kapena wachisanu pamalowo panali patayereratu. Kenako galuyo anakhala pansi kwinku akugwedezero mchira wake. Amoge anasunthanso miyendo yake ija ndipo ulendo unonso panali kadoontho kakang'ono kabibi lobiriwira. Nwanku ataona kabibiko anakaderera moti sanavutike ndi kunyamula matakoko ake. Iye anangosolola khosi lake n'kuseteka ndi lirime lake kenako n'kukhalanso tsonga. Mwanayo tsopano anali atamaliza kubiba ndipo galu uja anayamba kulimbana ndi ntchentche ina kuti ailume.

Maganizo a Edogo anakana kukhala pa chitseko ankasemacho. Kachiwirinso anaika pansi hamala yake n'kutenga tchizulo chomwe chinali kudzanja lake lamanzere n'kuchigwira ndi dzanja lamanja. Mwana uja tsopano anali atasiya kulira ndipo kenako maganizo a Edogo anachoka kwa mwanayo n'kuyamba kuganizira zimene anakambirana ndi bambo ake komanso mchimwene wake Obika. Vuto la Ezeulu linali lakuti sankafuna kusintha maganizo pa chinthu. Ankachita zofanana ndi anthu omwe amati akayamba kuyang'ana chinthu safuna kuchotsa maso awo pa chinthucho mpaka maso awo ataphulika. Aliyense ankavomereza kuti ubwenzi wa Obika ndi Ofoedu udzamubweretsera mavuto, koma tsopano Obika sanali-

nso mwana. Ngati akanasankha kukana kumvera malangizo, palibe akanalimbana naye. Mfundo imeneyi ndi imene bambo ake ankalephera kuiphunzira. Iye ankawachitirabe ana ake ngati ana ang'onoang'ono ndipo akakana kuchita chinachake pankabuka mavuto aakulu. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake pamene ana ake ankaoneka kuti akukula m'pamenenso zinkaoneka kuti akudana nawo kwambiri. Edogo ankakumbukirabe mmene bambo ake ankamukondera ali mwana. Iye sanaiwale mmene zinthu zinasinthira anasinkhuka n'kuona bambo ake akusiya ndipo chikondi chimenecho chinasamukira kwa Obika, kenako kwa Oduche ndipo pamapeto pake kwa Nwafo. Pamene ankaganizira zimenezi, Edogo anakumbukira kuti bambo ake sanayambe asonyezapo kuti amakonda Oduche. Iye ankaoneka kuti maganizo ake onse anali pa Obika (yemwe ankafanana naye kwambiri) ndipo kenako m'kupita kwa nthawi anayamba kukonda kwambiri Nwafo m'malo mwa Oduche. Kodi chikanachitika n'chiyani ngati bambo wawo wokalambawa akanakhalanso ndi mwana wina? Kodi akanasiyanso kukonda kwambiri Nwafo n'kuyamba kukonda mwana winayo? Kapena mwina Nwafo ndiye anamukondetsetsa? Kodi panali chinachake chapadera ndi Nwafo, chomwe chinawatsimikizira kuti ameneyo ndi amene ali woyenerera kudzakhala wansembe iwo akadzamwalira? Anthu ena ankanena kuti Nwafo anali wofanana kwambiri ndi agogo awo, bambo a Ezeulu. Kunena zoon, Edogo ankaona kuti sangadzadabwe zikadzachitika kuti mkanda wa woombeza wagwera Nwafo kuti akhale wansembe bambo awo akadzatsamira mkono.

“Ine sindima funa kudzakhala Mkulu Wansembe,” iye anadzidzimuka kudzimva akunena mawu amenewa mokweza moti anayang'ana mbali zonse kuti aone ngati panali wina yemwe anamumva. “Kunena za Obika,” ule-

ndo uno sanatulutse mawu anangoganiza mumtima mwa-ke, “zodzakhala wansembe sanaziganizirepo n’komwe. Zomwe zikusiya panzerewu Oduche ndi Nwafo basi. Koma popeza Ezeulu anatumiza Oduche kuchipembedzo chatsopanochi, ndiye kuti nayenso wachokochedwapo panzerewu.” Maganizo achilendo anamumeza Edogo. Kodi mwina bambo awo anatumiza dala Oduche kuchipembedzo cha azungucho kuti asakhale woyenerera kudzakhala wansembe wa Ulu? Pamenepo Edogo anaika pansitichizulo chija chomwe ankawongolera mizera yomwe ankazokota pachitseko chamtengo wa *iroko* chija maganizo ake ali patali kwambiri. N’kutheka kuti chimenechi ndiye chinali chifukwa chake! Ngati zinali choncho ndiye kuti udindo wa unsembewo ukanagwera pa mwana wake womaliza yemwe ankamukonda kwambiri. Palibe munthu amene ankakhutira ndi chifukwa chimene Ezeulu anapereka potumiza Oduche kutchalitchi chatsopanocho. Ngati zinali zoono kuti amangofuna kuti mwana wake wina akakhale maso komanso makutu ake kutchalitchi chatsopanocho, n’chifukwa chiyani sanatumize Nwafo yemwe ankagwirizana ndi zimene ankafunazo? Ayi, n’kutheka kuti chimenechi si chifukwa chake chenicheni. Wansembeyu anachita zimenezi kuti akhale ndi ufulu wosankha woti adzalowe m’malo mwake. Zimenezi ndi zimene aliyense yemwe ankamudziwa bwino Ezeulu akanayembekezera kuti zichitika. Koma kodi kuchita zimenezi sikukanakhala kupitirira malire ake? Nkhanitu yosankha wansembe imakhala m’manja mwa mulungu. Kodi mulunguyo akanalola kuti wansembe wokalambayo achite zimene akufuna? Ngakhale Edogo ndi obika akanakhala kuti sakufuna kukhala pa udindowu, zimenezo sizikanachititsa kuti mulungu asawasankhe, ngakhalenso Oduche. Zimenezi zinaoneka kuti zinamusokoneza maganizo Edogo. Ngati Ulu

akanamusankha kuti akhale Mkulu Wansembe, kodi akanatani? Maganizo amenewa sankamuvutitsa m'mbuyomo chifukwa sankona kuti Ulu angamusankhe kukhala wansembe. Koma mmene zinthu zinkaonekera, ankaona kuti zimenezo zikhoza kuchitika. Kodi akanasangalala ngati mkanda wa woombeza ukanagwera pa iye? Iye analibe chonena. Chimene sankagwirizana nacho ndi choti bambo ake ankakondera mwana wawo wamng'ono, zomwenso n'kutheka kuti zinkamunyansa Ulu. Iye ankaona kuti Ezeulu akadzamwalira n'kupira kudziko la Ani-Mmo komwe akufa amapita, adzaona mapulani ake onse akusweka ngati dzira.

Edogo anadabwa kwambiri ndi nkwiyo wosawafunira zabwino bambo ake womwe anali nawo. Iye ankakumbukira zimene mayi ake ankanena adakali moyo. Ankati vuto la Ezeulu linali loti ankayembekezera aliye—kaya ndi akazi ake, achibale ake, ana ake, anzake ngakhale adani ake—kuti aziganiza komanso kuchita zinthu mofanana ndi iyeyo. Aliyense amene ankachita zotsutsana naye ankakhala mdani wake. Anaiwaliratu mwambi uja womwe umati munthu amene amafuna kupeza mnzake wofanana naye ndendende, amafa ali yekha.

Ezeulu sanasunthe pomwe anakhala paja kungochokera pamene anakangana ndi Obika. Nsana wake unali utatsamira khoma ndipo maso ake analunjika kumphambano kuti aziona amene akubwera kwawoko. Mwa apa ndi apo ankayang'anitsitsa kachisi wapakhomopo yemwe anali ndi kakhomo kakang'ono. Kumanzere kwake kunali kama wozira ndipo pakamapo panayalidwa zikopa za mbuzi kuti munthu akakhalapo asamadzuke atatuwa. Nsonga za udzu

wakudenga wa pamene anakhala zinali zoduliridwa bwino kuti azitha kuona kumwamba akamafufuza mwezi watso-pano. Dzuwa likamakwera, kuwala komwe kunkawalitsa m'nyumba muja kunkachokera pakakhomo kakang'ono ka *obi* wake. Nwafo anali atakhala pampando wozira uja moyang'anizana ndi bambo ake. Mkati mwa nyumbayi chakukona, kumanja kwa Ezeulu, kunali kama wansungwi. Pambali pa kamayu panali moto ndipo pamotopo panali chipika cha mtengo wa *ukwa* chomwe chinkafuka pang'onopang'ono.

Ezeulu anayamba kuyankhula ndi Nwafo akuyang'anabe kunjira kuja.

“Munthu samanamiza mwana wake,” anatero Ezeulu. “Uzikumbukira zimenezi nthawi zonse. Kunena kuti *bambo anga anandiuza zakutizakuti*, n'chimodzimodzi kulumbulira pamaso pa milungu. Iweyo udakali mwana, koma inenso bambo anga anayamba kundiuza zinthu zachinsinsi ndidakali kamwana. Koma ukumva zimene ndikunenazi?”

Nwafo anavomera.

“Waona zimene zachitikira mchimwene wako. Masiku akubwerawa mkazi wake abwera pakhomo pano ndipo sadzitchedwanso mwana. Anthu adera akamuona asiya kufunsa kuti, kodi ameneyu ndi mwana wa ndani? Azifunsa kuti, kodi munthu ameneyu ndani? Komanso akaona mkazi wake asiya kufunsa kuti, kodi ndi mwana wa ndani? Azifunsa kuti, ameneyu ndi mkazi wa ndani?” Nwafo anayamba kuona kuti nkhope ya bambo akewo yayamba kunona ndi thukuta. Munthu wina ankayenda molowera kumene kunali khumbi la Ezeulu ndipo Ezeulu anasiya kuyankhula.

“Ndi ndani akubwerayo?” Ezeulu anatembenusa maso ake kuti aone amene ankabwera. Nwafo anachoka

pampando wozira anakhala uja ndipo anabwera chapakati pa khumbilo kuti aone amene akubwera.

“Ndi Ogbuefi Akuebue,” anatero Nwafo.

Akuebue anali m’modzi mwa anthu ochepa kwa mbiri omwe Ezeulu ankamvetsera zonena zawo. Anthu awiriwa anali m’gulu la anthu amsinkhu umodzi. Pamene ankayandikira khumbilo, Akuebue anakweza mawu ake n’kufunsa kuti: “Kodi mwini nyumba iyi sanamwalirebe?”

“Ndimadabwatu kuti ndi ndani akuyenda ngati akufuna kuulukayu?” anafunsa Ezeulu. “Kodi munthu iwe si uja tinamva uthenga woti unamwalira pa tsiku la *Afo* misika iwiri yapitayo?”

“Mwina nawenso sukudziwa kuti anthu amsinkhu wakowu anatha kumwalira onse. Kapenatu ukudikira kuti udzachte kumera bowa pamutu pakopo kuti udzadziwe kuti nthawi yako inatha?” Akuebue tsopano anali atalowa m’khumbi koma ankayendabe chowerama monga mmene anachitira pamene ankadutsa pakhonde la khumbilo. Mko-no wake wamanja unali utagwira pabondo ndipo thupi lake linawerama m’chiwuno ngati mtolo wa udzu. Asana-weramuke anapereka moni wapadzanja kwa Ezeulu. Kenako anayala pansi chikopa chake chambuzi pafupi ndi kama wozira uja ndipo kenako anakhala pansi.

“Anthu ako ali bwanji?”

“Sakulongolola.” Umu ndi mmene Akuebue ankayankhira anthu akamufunsa za banja lake. Zimenezi zinkamudabwitsa kwambiri Nwafo. Iye akamva Akuebue akunena zimenezi ankangoona m’maganizo mwake akazi komanso ana a Akuebue atangokhala mokhumata.

“Nanga anthu ako ali bwanji?” Akuebue anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Palibe amene wamwalira.”

“Ndinamva zoti Obika anakwapulidwa ndi mzungu,

ndi zoona?”

Ezeulu anatambasula manja ake m'mwamba ndipo sananene kanthu.

“Ndiye akuti analakwa chiyani?”

“Bwanawe, tiye tikambe nkhani ina. M'mbuyomu zangati zimenezi zikachitika ndinkadwala nazo. Koma nthawi imeneyo inapita. Masiku ano ndikumangokhala ngati mwala. Nwafo, pita ukawauze mayi ako kuti abwe-retse kola.”

“Komatu ndinawamva m'mawawu akunena kuti kola kwawo watha.”

“Ndiyetu pita ukamufunse Matefi.”

“Kodi umazunzikiraji kufufuza kola ndikabwera kuno? Inetu si mlendo.”

“Ine sindinaphunzitsidwe kuti kola timaswera ale-ndo okhaokha,” anatero Ezeulu. “Komanso si paja makolo athu anatiuza kuti chitsiru ndi chimene chimachitira m'ba-le wake zoipa n'kumakonda anthu adera? Koma ndiku-dziwa chimene ukuopa. Anthu ena anandiuza kuti wango-tsala magweru okhaokha.” Pamene ankanena zimenezi anatenga choko choyera m'mbale yooneka ngati mutu wa buluzi. Kenako anatolamo choko n'kuchiponyera pansi moti chokocho chinagubudukira kumene kunali Akuebue. Akuebue anachitola n'kulemba mizere inayi pansi. Kena-ko anapaka chokocho pachala chake chamanthu cha mwe-ndo wakumanja n'kuponyanso choko chija kwa Ezeulu yemwe anachitola n'kuchiikanso m'mbale.

Posakhalitsa, Nwafo anatulukira ndi mbale ya kola.

“Kamuonetse Akuebue,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Inetu ndiliba maso oti ndionere kola wakoyu,” anayankha Akuebue.

“Ndikufuna kuti undiswere kolayo.”

“Sindikufuna. Nanga mlendo samaswa kola mwini-

khomo ali pomwepo?”

“Nanunso musamavute ngati tikukufunsirani. Basi bweretsani, tingatayepo nthawi apa.”

Ezeulu analandira mbale ya kola ija kuchokera kwa Nwafo ndipo anaika mbaleyo pakati pa miyendo yake. Kenako anatola kola ndi dzanja lake lamanja n’kuyamba kupemphera. Iye ankayendetsa dzanja lake kutsogolo pamene ankanena chiganizo chilichonse, atagwira kolayo ndi zala zinayi momulozetsa m’mwamba.

“Ogbuefi Akuebue, ukhale ndi moyo wautali, limodzinsu ndi anthu ako. Inenso ndikhale ndi moyo wautali limodzi ndi anthu anga. Koma moyo paokha si wokwanira. Tonse tikhale ndi zakudya zokwanira kuti moyo tisaumve kuwawa. Chifukwatu pali moyo wina womwe umakhala woipa kwambiri kuposa imfa.”

“Zimenezo ndi zoona,” anayankhira Akuebue.

“Munthu wina aliyense, wolemera kaya wosauka, onse akumane ndi zabwino. Koma amene amachitira anzake nsanje atsamwe ndi nsanje yakeyo.”

“Zikhaledi momwemo.”

“Zabwino zikhuthuke m’dziko la anthu a chiIgbo komanso kwa anthu ena onse.”

Kenako anaswa kola uja ndipo kenako anaponya mtedza wonse m’mbale ija.

“O-o-o-o-o-o-o-o,” anatero Ezeulu kenako n’kupitiriza ndi muluzi.

“Taona zimene zachitika apa. Nayonsotu mizimu ikufuna kudya nawo.”

Ezeulu anatola mtedza umodzi n’kuuponyera pansu. Kenako anatola wina n’kuuponya mkamwa. Ndiyeno Nwafo anabwera n’kunyamula mbale munali mtedzayo n’kukamupatsira Akuebue. Kwa kanthawi palibe anayankhula. Pankangomveka phokoso la kutafuna basi.

“N’zodabwitsa mmene kola amachitira,” anatero Ezeulu atamezera maulendo awiri. “Sindikukumbukira pamene ndinaswa kola n’kupeza mtedza usanu ndi umodzi.”

“Sizichitikachitikadi, ndipo nthawi zina zimachitika pamene sukuyembekezera,” anatero Akuebue. “Ngakhale mtedza usanu zimangochitika mwa apa ndi apo. Zaka zingapo zapitazo ndinaswa kola wodzaza madengu asanu koma osapeza kola wokhala ndi mtedza usanu woti ndikapereke nsembe. Nwafo, pita kukhumbi la mayi ako ukanditungire madzi akumwa m’chikho chachikulu . . . Kutentha kumeneku kubwera ndi zinthu ndithu.”

“Ndikuganiza kuti chimenechi ndi chizindikiro cha mvula, kumwambaku kwadzaza madzi,” anatero Ezeulu. Pamene ankanena zimenezi anadzuka nsana wake ataupindabe n’kuyenda mapazi angapo kupita cha kumene kunali kama wake wansungwi ndipo anakatenga chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi. Chikwamacho chinakonzedwa mwaukatswiri zedi. Zinkangokhala ngati mbuzi yomwe inkakhala m’chikopamo inangosololedwamo mofanana ndi mmene ena amasololera nkho m’chikamba chake. Chikopa cha miyendo komanso mchira wa mbuziyo chinali chidakali pomwepo. Ezeulu anatenga chikwamacho n’kupita nacho pamene anakhala paja n’kulowetsa dzanja lake lonse mkati. Kenako anayamba kufufuza botolo lake la fodya wofwenkha. Atalipeza analitulutsa n’kuliika panso n’kupitiriza kufufuza kankombero ka nyanga ya njovu. Posakhalitsa anakapeza kankomberoko ndipo anaika chikwama chija pambali pake. Kenako anatenga kabotolo kafodya kaja, komwe kanali koonekera mkati, n’kukakweza m’mwamba kuti aone kuchuluka kwa fodya yemwe anatsalamo. Atatero anakamenyetsa pabondo lake n’kukatsegula. Ndiyeno anapungulira fodyayo pang’ono

pachikhatho chake chadzanja lamanzere.

“Ndigaireko fodyayo kuti nanenenso ndiyeretseko m’maso,” anatero Akuebue yemwe anali akungomaliza kumene kumwa madzi ake.

“Bwera udzatenge. Pajatu phiri siliyendera nyani,” anayankha Ezeulu. “Ndikuganiza kuti sukuyembekezera kuti ndikugaire fodya komanso ndichite kukuyendera kuti ndidzakupatse fodyayo.”

Akuebue anadzuka mowerama nkono wake wamanja atagwira pabondo ndipo anatambasula chikhatho chake kuti Ezeulu apungulirepo fodyayo.

“Sindikufuna kulimbana nawe,” anatero Akuebue. “Iweyo ukhala phiri, ineyo nyani.”

Ezeulu anatapa mikombero iwiri pachikhatho chake n’kupungulira pachikhatho cha Akuebue. Kenako anapungulanso wake kuti afwenkhe.

“Komatu fodyayu ndi wabwino,” anatero Akuebue. Mphuno yake imodzi inali itapakika ndi fodyayo. Kenako anatapanso fodya wina n’kudzamuika pamphuno yotsalayo ndipo anafwenkha maulendo atatu kapena anayi kwinaku akupukusa mutu wake. Tsopano pamphuno zake zonse ziwiri panali patapakika fodya. Ezeulu ankagwiritsa ntchito kankombero ka m’nyanga wanjovu kaja m’malo mogwiritsa ntchito zala zake.

“Ine sindigula fodya wanga kumsika,” anatero Ezeulu, “n’chifukwa chake ali wabwino kwambiri.”

Kenako Edogo anatulukira ndi chikho cha uchema. Atangofika, anapereka malonje kwa Akuebue ndi bambo ake, ndipo kenako anaika panso chikho chija.

“Inetu sindimadziwa kuti uli ndi uchema,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Munthu wina amene ndikumusemera chitseko wangonditumizira kumene.”

“Ndiye n’chifukwa chiyani ukubweretsa uchemawu pali mnzanga wadyerayu? Iyeyutu amakhala ngati anatolera mimba zonse za abale ake omwe anamwalira!”

“Komatu Edogo sananene kuti uchemawu wabweretsa iwe.” Kenako anatembenukira kwa Edogo n’kumufunsa kuti: “Nanga wanena choncho ngati?” Edogo anayamba kuseka ndipo ananena kuti wabweretsa onse.

Akuebue anatulutsa nyanga yake kuchokera m’chikwama ndipo anaimenyetsa pansi katatu. Kenako anapukutsa milomo ya nyangayo ndi dzanja lake kuti achotse fumbi. Nayenso Ezeulu anatulutsa nyanga yake ndipo anatcherezera kuti Edogo apunguliremo uchema uja. Edogo atamaliza kuwapungulira bambo akewo, anapita kwa Akuebue ndipo nayenso anamupungulira mpaka nyanga yake kusefukira. Asanamwe, Ezeulu ndi Akuebue anapungulira pang’ono uchemawo pansi ndipo anayamba kuitanira pa mizimu ya makolo awo.

“Thupi langa likundiphwanya osati pang’ono,” anatero Ezeulu, “moti mowawu ndikungomwera kusamva.”

“Inensotu ndikuona choncho,” anatero Akuebue yemwe anali atamaliza kugugudiza nyanga yake yoyamba ndipo anapinda nkhope yake mokhala ngati akudikirira kumva mawu kuchokera m’mutu mwake omuuza ngati mowawo uli wabwino kapena ayi.

Edogo anabwereka nyanga ya bambo ake aja n’kupunguliramo mowa woti nayenso amwe. Kenako Oduche anatulukira n’kupereka moni kwa bambo ake ndi Akuebue ndipo anapita kukakhala ndi Nwafo pakama wozira uja. Popeza anali atayamba chipembedzo cha azungu, Oduche anali atasintha kavalidwe moti nthawi zonse ankavala nsalu yam’chiuno. Edogo anapungulanso uchema wina ndipo anamupatsa Oduche koma anakana. “Nanga bwanji Nwafo, umwa?” anafunsa Edogo koma nayenso anakana.

“Kodi paja unati upita liti ku Okperi?” anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Ndipita mkucha.”

“Ukakhalako kwa nthawi yaitali bwanji?”

“Anati tikakhalako misika iwiri.”

Ezeulu ankaoneka kuti akutembenuza nkhaniyo m’maganizo mwake.

“Akufuna mukataniko?” anafunsa Akuebue.

“Akufuna akatipime nzeru zathu pa zimene tikudzidwa zokhudza Malemba Oyera.”

Akuebue anakhwinyatitsa mapewa ake.

“Koma ineyo sindikuganiza kuti ndi nzeru kweni-kweni kuti upite kumeneko,” anatero Ezeulu. “Komabe dikira kaye, mwina maganizo anga akhoza kusintha tsiku linanso likadutsa.” Pamene ananena zimenezi, palibe amene ananena chilichonse kapena kumuyankha.

Oduche ankawadziwa bwino bambo akewo moti sanadzivutitse ndi kuwatsutsa.

Akuebue anamwanso nyanga ina ya uchema ndipo kenako anayamba kukukuta mano. Mawu omwe ankadikira kuchokera m’mutu mwake aja anali atamuuzwa kuti uchemawo ndi wabwino kwambiri. Iye anamenyetsanso nyanga yake ija pansi maulendo angapo kwinaku akupe-mphera.

“Munthu amene anatcheza uchema umenewu akhale ndi moyo wautali kuti apitirizebe kugwira ntchito ya bwino. Nafenso omwe tikumwa uchemawu tione masiku ambiri kuti tipitirize kuyamikira ntchito yake. Chimo-dzimodzinso anthu onse omwe ali m’dziko la Olu komanso Igbo.”

Kenako anapukuta milomo ya nyanga yake ija n’kuibwezeretsa m’chikwama.

“Mukhoza kumwanso nyanga inatu,” anatero Edo-

go.

Akuebue anapukuta pakamwa pake ndi kuseri kwa dzanja asanayankhe.

“Mankhwala a mowatu ndi kudziletsa.” Mawu amenewa anakhala ngati abweza maganizo a Ezeulu omwe anali atasamukira kwina.

“Usanabwere,” anatero Ezeulu kwa Akuebue, “ndi mauza anawa kuti ngakhale munthu wabodza kwambiri sanganamize ana ake.”

“Zoonadi,” anatero Akuebue. “Munthu akhoza kulumbira pamaso pa mulungu woopsa kwambiri pa zimene bambo ake anamuza.”

“Ngati munthu akukaikira zokhudza malire a malo ake ndi a mnzake,” anapitiriza Ezeulu, “amauza ana ake kuti: *Ndikuganiza kuti malire athu ndi awa, koma pakadzabuka mikangano pa nkhani ya malire musadzalumbire pamaso pa mulungu.*”

“Zimenezonso ndi zoonadi,” anatero Akuebue.

“Koma zomvetisa chisoni n’zakuti nthawi zina munthu akayankhula zoonadi, ana ake amasankha kusamumvera n’kumamvetsera mabodza . . .” Mawu ake ankakwera ndi liwu lililonse ndipo anasintha n’kuyamba kumveka moopsa ngati akusula chitsulo. Kenako anakhala kaye chete kwinku akupukusa mutu wake mwamphamvu. Pamene ankayambiranso kuyankhula, ankayankhula modekha. “Chimenecho n’chifukwa chake mlendo akhoza kukwapula mwana wanga n’kunyamuka kumapita osalangi-dwa. Zimenezi zikuchitika chifukwa ana anga anatsonyeza dzikonyo m’mapirikaniro awo kuti asamve zimene ndikuwauza. Kodi si zoonadi kuti mlendoyo amadziwa kale zimene angakumane nazo akaputana ndi Ezeulu? Akana-dziwa zimene ndinkachita anthu kale sakanayerekeza kundipala mamba mwamtundu umenewu. Anakachimina

mpe-e mpe-e! Ndikanamumeza wathunthu n’kumulavulanso wamoyo. Akawafunse anzake omwe ndinawasendapo zikopa m’mbuyomu.”

“Kodi Obika ndi amene anayamba kumumenya?” anafunsa Akuebue.

“Ndidziwa bwanji? Chomwe ndikudziwa ndi choti pamene amachoka kuno anali ali topitopi ndi uchema. Ngakhale pamene amabwerako maso ake anali asanaye-rebe.”

“Koma anthu akumanena kuti Obika si amene anayamba kumumenya,” anatero Edogo.

“Kodi nawenso unali komweko?” anafunsa Ezeulu. “Kapena ukhoza kulumbira kwa mulungu potengera zime-ne munthu woledzera wakuuza? Ndikanakhala kuti sindikayikira mwana wangayu, kodi ndikanakhala pano n’kumayankhula ndi inu munthu amene anatenga chala chake n’kumanditokosa mumphuno atapita kwawo n’kumakagona tulo tabwino? Ndikanakhala kuti ndamuchitira chifundo ndikanangomutsira mphepo ndipo akanadziwa kulemera kwa mawu otuluka pakamwa panga.” Pamene ankana zimenezi, nkwiyo unayamba kusonkhana m’zibakera zake.

“Zimene wanenazo ndi zoona,” anatero Akuebue. “Koma ndikuonabe kuti pali chimene tikufunika kuchita pambuyo poti tadziwa ngati alidi Obika amene anayambitsa ndewu . . .” Ezeulu sanamulole kuti amalize.

“Kodi ndinyamuka bwanji pano n’kupita kumakafunsa anthu adera kuti andiuze zimene mwana wanga wachita? Ineyotu ndi amene ndikuyenera kumawafotokozera.”

“Zoona. Koma tiyeni kaye choyamba tithamangitse vumbwe, kenako tizikalipira nkhuku poyenda mtchire mosasamala.” Akuebue anatembenukira kwa Edogo. “Kodi

Obika wapita kuti?”

“Zikuoneka kuti zimene ndakuuza zanja pakhutu lako,” anatero Ezeulu. “Kodi ali . . .”

Edogo anamudula mawu. “Wachoka limodzi ndi Ofoedu. Wachoka atanyanya chifukwa bambo anangoyamba kumudzudzula m’malo moti amufunse kaye chimene chinachitika.”

Zimene Edogo ananenazi zinamutsukunyula mtima Ezeulu moti mmene ankaonekera ankangokhala ngati munthu amene akuyesa kupirira atalumidwa ndi pheterere. Kenako anatsamira khoma atatseka maso ake, zomwe ena aja sankayembekezera kuti angachite atamva mwana wake akumuneneza choncho. Pamene ankatsegula maso akewo anayamba kuimba mluzu chapansipansi. Akuebue anagwedeza mutu kanayi kapena kasanu ngati munthu amene watulukira mfundo inayake yofunika. Ezeulu anasuntha mutu wake pang’ono kenako anautukula n’kuutsitsanso akuimbabe mluzu motsitsa.

“Izi ndi zimene ndimakonda kuuza ana anga,” anatero Akuebue kwa Edogo komanso anyamata ena awiri aja. “Ndimawauza kuti bambo amadziwa zinthu zambiri kuposa ana ake.” Zinali zoonekeratu kuti ananena izi kuti akhazike pansi mtima wa Ezeulu. Koma pa nthawi imodzimodziyo anali atayankhula choonadi chosatsutsika. “Nonse amene mukuganiza kuti ndinu anzeru kwambiri kuposa bambo anu mumaiwala kuti bambo amatapako nzeru zake pang’ono n’kugawira ana ake. Moti si kulakwa kunena kuti ana amene amaseka zochita za bambo awo amakhala akudziseka okha. Limeneli ndiye tanthawuzo la mwambi uja umanena kuti mako ndi mako angachepe mwendo. N’chifukwa chiyani ndanena zimenezi? N’chifukwa choti ineyo si mlendo pakhomo pano ndipo sindikuopa kunena maganizo anga. Ndikudziwa mmene bambo

anu akhala akuchonderera Obika kuti asiye kucheza ndi Ofoedu. Koma n'chifukwa chiyani Obika sanamvere? N'chifukwa choti nonse—osati Obika yekha, kuphatiki-zaponso mwana uyo wakhala apoyo—mumaganiza kuti ndinu anzeru kwambiri kuposa bambo anu. Nawonso ana anga amachita zomwezo. Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene mumaiwala. Mumaiwala kuti nzeru zimabwera ndi masiku. Akuluakulufe tikamayankhula sitimangoyankhula kuti titulutse mawu okoma pakamwa pathu. Tima-yankhula chifukwa timaona zinthu zimene inuyo simungazione. Makolo athu anapanga miyambi ingapo yokhudza nkhani imeneyi. Anati munthu wamkulu akhoza kuona zam-biri atakhala pansu kusiyana ndi zimene mwana angaone ataimirira. Ananenanso kuti ukaona nkhalamba yachizimayi itasiya kuvina n'kuyamba kuloza malo enaake mobwerezabwereza, dziwa kuti pali chinachake choopsa chomwe chinachitika pamalo amenewo. Galu wamkota sakandira pachabe ananu. Obika akabwera udzamuuze zimene ndanenazi, wamva Edogo?" Edogo anagwedezera mutu. Koma sankakhulupirira mfundo yakuti bambo sanganamize ana ake.

Akuebue anatembenuka mokhwekhwereza matako ake n'kuyang'ana Ezeulu. "Si mwambo wathu ku Umuaro kuno," anatero Akuebue, "kupeza mbali imodzi yokha kukhala yolakwa, ina n'kukhala yosalakwa. Ndayankhula ndi anawa, koma nawenso sindingakubisire chichewa. Ndikuganiza kuti umamukhwimitsira zinthu kwambiri Obika. Kuwonjezera kuti ndiwe Mkulu Wansembe, unadalitsidwa ndi banja labwino. Koma m'mabanja onse ochita bwino mumakhala anthu amaganizo osiyanasiyana—ena abwino, ena oipa; ena opanda mantha, ena amatha; ena osonkhanitsa chuma, ena ochimwaza; ena omwe opereka malangizo abwino, ena osweka mitu. Chimenechi

n'chifukwa chake timanena kuti, nyimbo iliyonse yomwe munthu angaimbe pakomo pa munthu wochita bwino, pamapezeka winawake woti akhoza kuivina. Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

9

Ngakhale kuti Tony Clarke anali atatha pafupifupi milungu isanu ndi umodzi ali ku Okperi, katundu wake wambiri, kuphatikizapo mbale ndi zipangizo zina zodyera, zinali zitangofika kumene. Mwa dzulo lake anapita kukayendera dera linalake lakutali. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake kufikira pano anali asanaitanebe Kaputeni Winterbottom kuti adzadye chakudya chamadzulo kunyumba kwake. Pamene ankadikirira kubwera kwa mlendoyo, Clarke ankaoneka wankhawa. Vuto limodzi lokhala kumalo ngati amenewa, komwe kunali azungu anayi okha (omwe ena a iwo ankangokhala ngati anadya matako agalu), linali loti munthu ankafunika kucheza ndi mlendo wogangalama ngati Winterbottom ali yekha. N'zoona kuti kameneka sikanali koyamba kucheza naye. Pa nthawi ina anadyera limodzi chakudya ndipo sikuti pamacheza awo zinthu zinayenda bwino kwenikweni. Koma ulendo umenewo Clarke ndi amene anali mlendo.

Ulendo uno iyeyo ndi amene anaitana Winterbottom ndipo udindo wonse woyambitsa nkhani komanso kusangalatsa mlendo wakeyo unali m'manja mwake. Clarke ankayenera kumuchezetsa mpaka pakati pa usiku kwina ku akumulupatsa mowa, zakudya komanso khofi. Iye ankaona kuti zikanakhala bwino kwambiri akanaitana munthu wina monga John Wright, yemwe anakumana naye pamene ankakayendera malo aja.

Koma kuchita zimenezo kunalinso ndi mavuto ake.

Pamene anali koyendako, Clarke ankagona m'nyumba ya udzu yomwe anthu ochokera kumalikuluku ankakafikira akapita kukagwira ntchito zaboma m'midzi yakumeneko. Nyumbayi inali pafupi ndi ku Umuaro ndipo anagona m'nyumbayi limodzi ndi Wright. Wright anakhala m'nyumbayi kwa milungu yoposa iwiri. Nyumbayo inali ndi zipinda ziwiri zazikulu ndipo m'chipinda chilichonse munali bedi, masikito, tebulo, mpando ndiponso kabati. Kumbuyo kwa nyumbayi kunali kakhumbi kena komwe ankakagwiritsa ntchito ngati khitchini. Chapataliko pang'ono kuchokera panyumbayi panali chimbudzi chokumbacha chomwe chinali ndi mtondo wokhalira wopangidwa ndi matabwa. Kutsogolo kwa chimbudzicho kunali timakhumbi tooneka mosalongosoka tomwe kunkakhala antchito komanso amtengatenga omwe ankanyamula katundu wa azungu akakhala paulendo. Nyumbayo inazunguliridwa ndi mpanda wa maheji enaake ofala kuderalo. Clarke anali asanaonepo maheji amtundu umenewu pamoyo wake ndipo kunena mwachilungamo, mahejiwo ankangokhala ngati tchire.

Mmene nyumbayi inkaonekera, zinali zosachita kufunsa kuti kwa nthawi yaitali yakhala isakusamalidwa. Munthu yemwe ankasamalira nyumbayi anathawa ataba mabedi awiri n'kuthawa. Zimenezi zitachitika, panagulidwanso mabedi ena. Ndiye pofuna kuteteza katunduyu kwa mbava ngati zimenezi, makiyi olowera m'nyumbayi komanso kuchimbudzi anayamba kusungidwa kumalikululu. Mzungu aliyense akamafuna kukagonera kunyumbayi, kalaliki wa Kaputeni Winterbottom ankayenera kukumbukira kupereka makiyi kwa antengatenga omwe ankanyamula katundu wa mzunguyo. Ulendo wina pamene mzungu wina dzina lake Wade ankapita ku Umuaro, kalalikiyo

anaiwala kuchita zimenezi moti ankafunika kuyenda mtunda wa mamailosi asanu ndi imodzi kapena asanu ndi awiri usiku kuti akapereke makiyiwo. Mwamwayi Wade sananyamuke patsikuli. Zikuoneka kuti anangotumiza anyamata amtengatengawo kuti akakonze nyumbayo. Koma zikanakhala kuti anayamuka patsikuli, kalalikiyo akanaona manthu wamavuto.

Pamene ankayenda kuzungulira nyumba yogona alendoyo, Tony Clarke ankangomva ngati ali kutali kwambiri ndi ku Okperi. Zinali zovuta kukhulupirira kuti unali mtunda wa mamailosi asanu ndi imodzi kapena asanu ndi awiri okha basi. Ngakhaleenso dzuwa linkaoneka ngati likulowera kolakwika. N'zosadabwitsa kuti anthu am'midzi ankaganiza kuti mtunda wa mamailosi asanu ndi imodzi n'chimodzimodzi kupita kudziko lakutali.

Madzulo a tsiku limenelo Clarke ndi Wright anakhala pakhonde la nyumba ija n'kumapha ludzu ndi mowa umene Wright anatulutsa. Kumudzi ngati kumeneku, komwe kunali kutali kwambiri ndi nyumba zaboma komanso kutali ndi Winterbottom, kunachititsa kuti Clarke ayambe kuona kuti Wright ndi munthu wabwino. Iye anadabwa atazindikira kuti Wright ankatha kupapira mowa wochuluka kwambiri mosagwirizana ndi msinkhu wake.

Clarke ndi Wright anangokumana kwa kanthawi kochepe m'mbuyomo. Koma ulendo uno ankangokhala ngati mabwenzi akalekale.

Clarke anaona kuti ngakhale kuti mnzakeyo ankaooneka wochimwa kale chifukwa cha maonekedwe a thupi lake lokulupala, mtima wake unali wabwino komanso anali woona mtima. Anamvetsa mfundo yakuti ali dere n'kulinga utayenda naye. Iye ankamvako bwino kucheza ndi Wright kusiyana ndi kumacheza ndi munthu wokhwimitsa zinthu komanso wovuta maganizo ngati Winter-

bottom.

“Kodi Tony, ukuganiza kuti Kaputeni akananena chiyani akanakhala kuti waona mnyamata wake akuchita zinthu mwaubwenzi komanso moganizira anthu akuda omwe akumagwira ntchito yolima nsewu?” Nkhope yake yaikulu yomwe inali yofiira inayamba kuoneka ngati ya kamnyamata.

“Sindikudziwa, komanso zimenezo sizikundikhudza,” anatero Clarke, ndipo chifukwa choti mowa unali utayamba kumulamulira, anawonjezera kuti: “Ndingakhale wosangalala kwambiri ngati pa zaka zonse zomwe ndi ngakhale ku Africa kuno nditakwanitsa kuchita chinthu cholozeka ngati kukonza nsewu . . .”

“Zimene wanenazo ndi zoonu.”

“Kodi tidzapanga mwambo wotsegulira nsewu umenewu?”

“Kaputeni wanena kuti ayi. Wanena kuti tawononga kale ndalama zochuluka kuposa zomwe anakonza kuti zilowe munsewuwu.”

“Ndiye chimenecho ndi chifukwa?”

“Inenso funso langa ndi lomwelo. Komatu timawononga ndalama zambirimbi kumanga makhosi am’mdzi m’chigawo chonsechi ngakhale kuti sagwira ntchito.”

“Koma ineyo ndikuona kuti si vuto la Kaputeni.” Clarke anali atazolowera tsopano kumutchula mwachipongwepongwe Winterbottom. “Zikuoneka kuti akuchita zimenezi potsatira lamulo lochokera kumalikulu zomwenso ndinamva kuti Kaputeni sakugwirizana nazo.”

“Komatu kumalikulu kwathuku kuli mavuto aakulu.”

“Indedi, nayenso Kaputeni amaona choncho.”

“Koma ukudziwa, n’kuthekatu kuti Kaputeni uja si woipa ngati mmene timamuonera. Ngakhale amaoneka

woopsa, mumtima mwake ndi munthu wabwino kwa-mbiri. Munthu amene uja wakumana ndi zokhoma zambiri m'moyo mwake moti panopa akufunika kusangalalako ndi moyo.”

“Ukutanthauza kuti akufunika kukwezedwa paudi-ndo?”

“Munthu uja wakhala akukumana ndi mavuto osaneneka. Mwina ndi amene amachititsa kuti azioneka woopsa,” anatero Wright. “Mwachitsanzo, pamene anapita kukamenya nkondo yolimbana ndi Ajeremani ku Cameroon, munthu wina wochenjera manja anamubera mkazi wake. Awiriwo anangosowetsana n’kumusiya Kaputeni manja ali m’khosi.”

“Zoono? Koyambatu kumva zimenezi.”

“Winterbottom anawonderatu ndi nkhani imeneyi. Sindikayikira kuti mavuto amenewa ndi omwe anachititsa kuti akhale wovuta chonchi.”

“N’kuthekadi. Mmene amaonera zinthu muja akhozadi kudwala mkazi wake atathawitsana ndi njonda ina,” anatero Clarke.

“Zoono. Munthu wokhwimitsa zinthu amavutika koopsa tsoka likamugwera.”

Usiku umenewo Clarke anauzidwa zonse zokhudza kusokonekera kwa banja la Winterbottom ndipo anamumvera chisoni kwambiri. Nayenso Wright ankaoneka kuti zinkamukhudza kwambiri pamene ankafotokoza nkhanio. Mosazindikira anangopezeka kuti asiya kumutchula mwachipongwe kuti Kaputeni n’kuyamba kumutchula ndi dzina lake lenileni lakuti Winterbottom.

“Vuto lalikulu limene lili ndi Winterbottom,” anatero Wright ataganizira kwa kanthawi, “ndi loti amadana ndi azimayi am’mudzi.” Clarke anadzidzimuka ndi mawu amenewa, ndipo kwa kanthawi anaiwaliratu za Winter-

bottom. Kungochokera pamene anabwera kudzayendera midziyi, iye ankadzifunsa funso lakuti: *Kodi vuto la azungu lozembetsana ndi azimayi am'mudzi lafika pati?*

“Sadzidwa kuti ngakhale magavanala omwe ali kumalikulu athu amalemba dala masekilitale ambirimбири achizimayi n'cholinga choti azichita nawo zachisembwere.” Wright ananyambitira milomo yake.

“Sindikuganiza kuti ndi nkhani ya kudziwa kapena kusadziwa,” anatero Clarke. “Iye uja amayendera mfundo zokhwima kwambiri. Amangokhala ngati amishonale omwe ndi anthu amene sadziwa kusangalala ndi moyo. Ndikuganiza kuti amachita zimenezi chifukwa anali mwana wam'busa. Bambo aketu anali mkulu wampingo wa *Church of England*. Koma bambo anga zopempherazi ndiye kunali kumbali. Anali kalaliki wa *Bank of England*. Ndiye ukuganiza kuti mwana wawo angakhale wotani? Sangachitire mwinatu kuposa kukhala wogwiragwira.” Onse anaseka kwambiri ndi nkhani imeneyi.

Ndiyeno pa tsiku lotsatira Pamene Clarke ankakumbukira kuti anaseka kwambiri atamva nthabwala imeneyi anazindikira kuti anamwa mowa wambiri chifukwa nthabwalayo sinali yoti n'kufika poseketsa munthu kwambiri choncho.

“Ndikuganiza kuti ukunena zoonza zoti amachita zinthu ngati m'mishonale. Ndimaona kuti analakwitsa pobwera kuno ngati nsilikali. Bola akanabwera ndi achina C.M.S. kapena anthu ena okonda zinthu zauzimu ngati amenewo. M'mbuyomu ndinamva zoti amayenda ndi dokotala wina wachizimayi yemwe amachita umishonale ku Nkisa. N'zoonza anthu amenena kuti makonda makonda buluzi anakonda khonde, koma ineyo ndimaona kuti munthu amene akufuna kusangalala ndi moyo sangakwatire m'mishonale yemwe amangokhalira kuwerenga Baibulo.

Ukachita chilichonse akhoza kumangokuwerengera mave-situ!”

Clarke ankafuna atafunsa zokhudza azimayi am’mudzi, kuti amasiyana bwanji ndi akazi achizungu ndiponso mafunso ena otero. Komabe, ngakhale mpha-mvu ya mowa sikanamuchititsa kufunsa mafunso amene-wo. M’malomwake anangopezeka kuti wasintha nkhanio n’kutaya mwayi womva zambiri. Zikuoneka kuti nayenso anayamba kutengeka ndi chiyeso chomwe chinkachititsa anzake kugwera m’manja mwa Mdyerekezi. M’madera akumidzi ngati amenewa, atsikana ankayenda osavala ndi-po akati avala bwino ankangodzikoleka zovala zopere-wera. Malinga ndi chikhalidwe chawo, limenelo silinali vuto. Vuto linkakhala ndi azungu omwe anali alendo ku-chikhalidwe choyenda osavalachi. Koma pamene magani-zo amenewa ankamubwerera, iye anawapha mofulumira. Ndi pambuyo pake pomwe ananong’oneza bondo kuti sa-nafunse.

“Malinga ndi zomwe ndinamva zokhudza Winter-bottom kumalikulu,” anatero Clarke, “ndimayembekezera kudzakumana ndi chidangwaleza cha munthu.”

“Ndikudziwa. Anthu ambiri amamujeda ku Enugu.”

“Pamene ndimawauza kuti ndikupita ku Okperi anati: *Wati ukupita kuti? Ukupita kukakumana ndi nkhalamba yovuta ija?* Kenako anayamba kundiyang’ana mondi-mvera chisoni. Ndinafunsa ena kuti andibenthulireko kuti nkhalambayo inalakwa chiyani, koma palibe amene anandiyankha. Ndiye tsiku lina ndinamva wolemekezeka aku-nena kuti: *Nkhalamba ija imangokhalira kuuza anthu kuti inabwera kuno mu 1910, koma sindinaimvepo ikutchula zimene yachita pa nthawi yonse yomwe yakhala kunoyi. Palibe chilichonse cholozeke chimene yachita.* Ndinada-bwa kuti ngakhale mamulumuzana a ku Enugu amanena

miseche yotere.”

“Kumatu kunena chilungamo,” anatero Wright akuyadamula, “nkhalambayi ndi yolimbikira ntchito kwambiri. Munthu atandiuza kuti amaona kuti nkhalambayi ndi yamanjalende, ndikhoza kumuuzza kuti konse kuno kulibe munthu amene amalimbikira ntchito. Makamaka ku Enugu ukunenako ndiye kwangodzaza ndi atambwali okha-okha.”

Zonsezi ndi zimene zinkayendayenda m’mutu mwa Clarke pamene ankadikirira kubwera kwa Winterbottom. Akaganizira mmene anamunenera Winterbottom, chikumbumtima chake chinkamuliza. Ankangodzimva ngati wagwidwa akunenera miseche m’mbale wake kwa munthu wadera. Koma kenako anayamba kudziikira kumbuyo. Iye ankaona kuti sananene chilichonse chonyazitsa Winterbottom. Nkhani inali yoti anangodziwa zambiri zokhudza iyeyo ndipo zimene anamvazo zinachititsa kuti ayambe kumumvetsa.

Kenako ananyamuka n’kupita kukhitchini ulendo wakhumi madzulo okhawu kuti akaone mmene khukhi wake ankakazingira nkhuu pamoto wankhuni. Iye ankaona kuti sizikhala bwino ngati nkhuu itakhala yolimba n’kufika posadyeka. N’zoona kuti nkhuu zonse zachikuda zinali ndi minofu yolimba ngati zimakoka ngolo komanso zinkakhala zazing’onozing’ono ngati mbalame. Ubwino wake unali wakuti nkhuu zinkakhala zotchipa kwambiri. Mwachitsanzo unkatha kugula tambala wamkulu pamtengo wa 2 pensi yokha basi. Koma ngakhale zinkatchipa chonchi, ena ankaonabe kuti ndi bwino awononge ndalama zambiri pogula nkhuu zachizungu zomwe zinkhala zonenepa, zamafuta komanso zosavuta kutafuna.

Khukhi yemwe ankaphika ndiwozi ankachita kuo-

nekeratu kuti kubwerabwera kwa Clarke kukumunyansa.

“Zikuyenda pamotopa koma?”

“Zikuyenda pang’onopang’ono,” anatero khukhiyo akutikita m’maso ndi kuseri kwa dzanja lake. Clarke anaponyaponya maso m’khitchinimo n’kutuluka kubwereranso pakhonde. Kenako anakhala pampando n’kuyambanso kuyang’ana wotchi yake. Nthawi inali itadutsa 7 kolo ndipo n’kuti kutatsala ola lathunthu kuti mlendo wake atulukire. Pamene ankadikira kuti nthawi ikwane, Clarke anayamba kuganizira nkhani zomwe angadzayambitse kuti machezawo asadzakhale ngati pamaliro. Uleno wake woyendera midzi womwe anapita uja ukanamupatsa zonena zambiri, koma mwatsoka anali atalemba zonse mulipoti lomwe anali atapereka kale kwa Winterbottom.

“Komatu zimenezi ndi zoseketsa,” Clarke anadzi-
uza mumtima mwake. N’chifukwa chiyani ankachita mantha ndi kubwera kwa Winterbottom ngati kuti iyeyo ndi chilombo? Kodi ankamuopa? Ayi ndithu! Nanga n’chifukwa chiyani kubwera kwake kunkamupatsa theng’ene-
ng’e? N’chifukwa chiyani ankangoti njenjenje ndi Winterbottom kokha chifukwa choti Wright anamuuza zina ndi zina zokhudza moyo wa munthu ameneyu zomwenso pafupifupi aliyense ankazidziwa bwino? Kwa kanthawi kuchokera pamenepa, Clarke anayamba kuganizira zokhudza kudziwa zambiri zokhudza anthu ena. Iye ankadzi-
funsa kuti, kodi kudziwa zambiri zokhudza munthu wina kumakuchititsa kukhala kapolo? Koma iye anaona kuti ayi, akaganizira miyambi yambirimbi yomwe imanena kuti kudziwa zambiri zokhudza munthu n’kumene kumapatsa mphamvu komanso kukuthandiza kuti uzidziwa mo-
chitira nawo. Koma kenako anayambanso kuona kuti nthawi zina kudziwa zambiri zokhudza munthu wina n’ku-

mene kumakuika pakona. Kumachititsa kuti uzimumvera chisoni kwambiri n’kufika pomaona kuti ndi udindo wako kumuthandiza. Kenako Clarke anayamba kuganizira za kusiyana kwa ulamuliro wachitsamunda wa Angelezi ndi wa Afalansa. Ankaona kuti Afalansa sanyengerera anthu amene ankawalamulira pomwe Angelezi sankachita chilichonse asanachite kafukufuku n’kudziwa mmene zinthu zimene akufuna kuchitazo zidzakhudzire anthu amene akuwalamulirawo. Iye ankaona kuti zimenezi ndi zimene zinkawabwezera m’mbuyo. M’malo moti achite zinthu zolozeka, ankachedwa ndi kuchita kafukufuku. Clarke anakhutira ndi mfundo anatulukirayi ndipo anaona kuti adzaiyambitse akamadzacheza ndi Winterbottom.

Chakudya chamadzulowo chinakonzedwa moutsa mudyo ndipo onse anasangalala nacho. Machezanso anayenda bwino kwambiri, kungoti panali maulendo awiri kapena atatu okha omwe zinthu zinayamba kuloza kola-kwika. Mwachitsanzo, Clarke anasungunukiratu ndi zime-ne Kaputeni Winterbottom ananena atangofika.

“Nditawerenga lipoti wandipatsa lija ndayamba kale kuona kuti utithandiza. Ntchito yako waiyamba bwino kwambiri,” anatero Winterbottom.

“Unali ulendo wosangalatsa kwambiri,” anayankha Clarke, akukhala ngati akufuna chiyamikirocho kuti chisapitirire. “Ndi chigawo chabwino zedi. Ndikutha kuona chimwemwe chomwe muli nacho mukamaona zinthu zikuyenda bwino m’chigawo chonsechi chifukwa cha utsogoleri wanu . . .” Clarke anadziletsa pa nthawi yake kuti asanene kuti ulamuliro wanu *wabwino*. Ngakhale anachita zimenezi, iye anayambanso kudziimba mlandu chifukwa zinkangokhala ngati wayamikira Winterbottom chifukwa choti anamuyamikira.

“Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene chikundide-

tsabe nkhwawa,” anatero Winterbottom akuoneka ngati sanamve chiyamikiro chija. “Mulipoti lako wanena kuti utafufuza wapeza kuti palibe umboni wosonyeza kuti Wright akumamenya antchito ake.” Mtima wa Clarke unazituka atangomva izi. Limeneli linali bodza lokhalo lomwe analemba mulipotilo. Kunena zooni, iye anaiwala dala kufufuza nkhanayi ngakhale ankadziwa kuti ndi yofunika. Pamene ankabwerera ku Okperi m’pamene analemba mwachidule ndi pensulo yake patsamba lachiwiri la kabuku kake komwe ankalembamo zomwe anaona paulendowo. Poyamba ankada nkhwawa za nkhanayi. Koma iye anaona kuti ngati Wright amamenyadi ogwira ntchito ake ndiye kuti munthu wina akanamukokera pambali n’kumutsina khutu. Ndiye popeza palibe aliyense amene anabwera kudzadandaula za nkhanayi, anangoona kuti angolemba zoti nkhanayo si yooni. Komanso kodi munthu akanafufuza bwanji nkhanayi ngati imeneyi mwini wake ali pomwepo? Kodi akanangopita kwa munthu aliyense wam’mudzi n’kumufunsa ngati anayamba wakwapulidwapo ndi Wright akugwira ntchito yolima nsewu? Kapena akanangomufunsa mwiniwakeyo? Malinga ndi mmene anamuonera Wright, Clarke sankakayikira kuti sangachite zimenezo.

“Wantchito wanga wina ndi wa ku Umuaro,” anapitiriza Winterbottom, “ndipo wangobwera kumene kuchokera kwawo komwe anakathako masiku awiri. Atangofika kuno anandiuza kuti mudzi wonse wasokonekera chifukwa munthu wina wodziwika anakwapulidwa ndi Wright. Koma n’kuthekadi kuti yangokhala mphekesera chabe.”

Clarke anayesetsa kuti asaonetsere kuti walakwitsa moti anadzilimbisa mtima n’kunena kuti: “Sindinamve za nkhanayi imeneyi panthawi yomwe ndinali paulendowo.”

Mawu akuti *panthawi yomwe ndinali* anamuluma Winterbottom ngati mavu atatu. Iye anaganiza kuti, ‘Munthu ameneyu ndi wodzimva bwanji! Akungokhala ngati ana-bwera kalekaletu kuno. Koma akudziwa kuti anangotu-midwa komanso kuti wangokhalako kwa mlungu umodzi basi?’ Kunena zoonza zinamukwana kwambiri Winterbottom kumumva Clarke akuyankhula ngati kuti iyeyo ndi amene amayang’anira chigawocho ndipo Winterbottom ndi mnyamata wake. Mwamwayi Winterbottom sanaikoke nkhanayi. Iye anali atatengeka ndi maganizo oti asankhe anthu kuti akhale mafumu m’madera omwe kunalibe, moti kungochokera pamenepa Winterbottom ankangokhalira kukamba za nkhanayi basi.

Clarke anadabwa kwambiri kuti Winterbottom sankayankhulanso mwaukali. Atamuyang’ana anaona kuti ankaoneka wotopa komanso wokalamba kwambiri. Koma pamene ankakamba za mafumuzu maonekedwe a nkhope yake anasintha ndipo inayambanso kuwala ngati ya mnyamata.

“Ndikuganiza kuti ndinakuuzapo za wansembe wina yemwe anandisangalatsa kwambiri pamene anayankhula zoonza pamlandu womwe unali pakati pa mtundu wake wa Umuaro ndi Okperi.”

“Ndakumbukira, munandiuzadi.” Clarke ankada nkhaba komanso kuchita mantha pamene ankaona mleendo wake akufuna kuchotsa mano polimbana ndi nthuli ya nkhuu yolimba kwambiri.

“Ndaganiza zoti ndimusankhe kuti akhale mfumu ya Umuaro. Ndinabwereramonso m’malipoti okhudza mkangano unachitikawo ndipo ndapeza kuti dzina lake ndi *Eze Ulu*. Mawu akuti *eze* mu chiIbo amatanthauza mfumu. Choncho munthuyu ali ngati wansembe-wachifumu.”

“Zimenezo zikutanthauza kuti udindo watsopano-

wu sukhala wachilendo kwenikweni kwa iye,” anatero Clarke.

“Zoon. Komabe anthu amenewa akakhala paudio si mmene amasinthiramo. Taganizira za tambwali wina yemwe tamusankha posachedwapa kuti akhale mfu-mu. Panopa anayamba kudzitchula kuti *Wolemekezeka Bambo Wathu Ikedi Woyamba, Obi wa ku Okperi*. Anthu amenewa amakonda udindo kwambiri moti akangouvala akumayamba kudzimva komanso kumadzipatsa maina ambirim-biri ngati amenewa.”

Clarke anatsegula pakamwa pake kuti anene kuti kufuna kutchuka komanso kudzipatsa maina audindo ambirim-biri ndi mliri wapadziko lonse, koma ataganiza bwinobwino anatseka pakamwa pake.

“Munthu ameneyu anali kafucheche weniweni ku-fikira pamene tinamulonga ufumu. Panopa utamuona sungakhulupirire nditakuuza kuti anasinthiratu moti aku-mayenda mapewa ali m’mwamba. Zangati zomwezi ndi zimenenso amachita akalaliki am’makhoti ngakhalenso mamesenjala. Akangopatsidwa udindo amasinthu n’kusa-nduka mimbulu yolusa moti amayamba kuzunza komanso kudya masuku pamutu anthu omwe akuwalamulira. Zikuoneka kuti ndi zam’magazi chifukwa sindinaonepo mutu wa munthu wakuda ukupitirizabe kugwira ntchito bwinobwino akapatsidwa udindo.”

Kenako wantchito anatulukira kuchokera mumdima atanyamula mbale ya nkuku m’dzanja limodzi, ndipo m’dzanja lina ananyamula mbale ya mbatata zophika zosakaniza ndi zakudya zina zamasamba. Yunifomu yake yokhuthala ngati chitsulo inkachita phokoso akamayenda ndipo anapita kukaima pafupi ndi Kaputeni Winterbottom.

“Ukaima mbali iyo Stephen!” anatero Clarke mo-kwiya. Stephen anamwetulira n’kupita kukaima mbali

imene anamulozerayo.

“Ayi basi. Ndakhuta tsopano,” anatero Winterbottom, ndipo akutembenukira kwa Clarke anati: “Khukhi wako amadziwa kuphika. Anzako amatsegula m’mimba maulendo angapo kuti apeze khukhi wabwino ngati ameneyu. Iweyo uli ndi mwayi.”

“Khukhi wanga uja ali ndi manja oipa kwabasi. Ndimaona kuti kuphika kumamuvuta . . . Basi Stephen sinditenganso zina, ndakhuta munthune.”

Atamaliza kudya chakudyacho, anatenga mbale ya zipatso zosiyanasiyana zomwe zinasededwa n’kudulidwadulidwa. Zipatso zake zinali papaya, nthochi komanso malalanje ndipo pamene ankadya zipatsozi, Winterbottom anapitiriza nkhani ya mafumu ija.

“Pa nkhani ya mafumuyi ndikuona kuti munthu amene angakhale mfumu ku Umuaro ndamupeza,” iye ananena zimenezi akumwetulira, “ndipo ndikuganiza kuti adzakhala ndi mfumu yabwino kwambiri. Ndikungoda nkhowa ndi ku Abame chifukwa anthu ake ndi osagwirizanika.”

“Kodi ndi anthu aja anapha Macdonald?” anafunsa Clarke, yemwe theka la maganizo ake linali pa zipatso zija zomwe zinkawawa pang’ono.

“Ndi omwewo. Koma panopa tinawachotsa mbola, moti samavutanso ngati kale. Koma zikuoneka kuti amachitabe zawozawo. M’chigawo chonsechi ndi anthu okhawo omwe sakufuna kumapititsa milandu kukhoti. Tango ganiza, chaka chapitachi anangopititsa milandu khumi ndi iwiri yokha kukhoti ndipo palibe mlandu ngakhale umodzi umene unapititsidwa ndi munthu wam’mudzi.”

“Koma ndiye ndi ouma mitutu,” anatero Clarke akuoneka kuti sanatsimikize kuti akunena zimenezo moseka kapena ayi.

Koma pamene Winterbottom ankayamba kufotokozaza zambiri zokhudza mafumu omwe ankafuna kuwalongawa, Clarke anagoma kwambiri ndi umunthu wake. Ngakhale anachita kukakamizidwa kuti asankhe mafumu, Winterbottom ankayesetsa kuchita zonse zomwe angathe kuti zimene analamulidwazo zitheke.

Mphunzitsi wa zamakhalidwe yemwe anamuphunzitsa Clarke kuyunivesite ya Cambridge ankakonda kumena za kumvera kwa mtundu umenewu. Zimene aphunzitsi akewo ankanena zinali ndendende zimene Winterbottom ankachita.

Atamaliza kudya zipatso zija anamwa khofi. Kenako anayamba kumwa mowa ndipo Winterbottom anayambanso kutsutsa mwamphamvu zokhudza zimene anauzidwa kuti achitezo. Koma zimenezi zinangochititsa kuti Clarke aonenso mbali ina ya umunthu wake.

“Chinthu chimene chimandiwawa kwambiri,” anatero Winterbottom, “ndi choti akuluakulu athu amakhala ngati sakudziwa chimene akufuna kuchita. Ine sindimadana ndi zimene amatiuza kuti tichite, ndimadana ndi kusinthatintha zochita. Taganizira za nkhani ya mafumuyi. Pamene Sir Hugh Macdermot anakhala gavanala, anatumiza mlembi wake kuti adzafufuze za nkhani imeneyi. Mlembiyo anabweradi kuno ndipo anatha nthawi yaitali akufufuza mavuto omwe angabwere akachita zimenezi ngakhale kuti ine ndinali nditawauza kale mavutowo. Malinga ndi zimene ankanena nditamufunsa, zinali zoonekeratu kuti nayenso ankaona kuti kusankha mafumu kukhoza kubweretsa mavuto osaneneka. Mmenemo munali m’chake cha 1919. Ndikukumbukira kuti ndinali ndikungobwera kumene kuchokera kutchuthi . . .” Mawu ake anasintha pamene ankanena zimenezi ndipo Clarke anaona nkhope yake itafiira ndi magari. Koma anadzilimbitsa

n’kupitiriza kuyankhula: “Zimenezo zinali zaka zoposa ziwiri zapitazo ndipo sitinamvenso chilichonse chokhudza lipoti limenelo. Koma mosiyana ndi zimene lipotilo lina-nena, lero a Lieutenant Governor akutiuzo zosiyana kothe-ratu ndi zimenezo. Kodi anthu amenewa akufuna chiyani kwenikweni, n’chifukwa chiyani amati akadzuka lero amanena izi, akadzuka mawa n’kuyambanso kunena zina? Kapenatu mitu yawo sigwira?”

“N’zotopetsadi,” anatero Clarke. “Tsiku lina ndi-maganizira za chikhalidwe chathu chokonda kufufuza zinthu. Pamenepa m’pamene ine ndimaona kuti timasi-yana kwambiri ndi Afalansa. Anthu amenewa akafuna kuchita chinthu amangozichita basi, sanyengereranso mu-nthu. Koma ife timayamba tafufuza kaye kuti tipeze umboni wonse, ngati kuti kufufuzako ndiye kuchita zi-nthuzo. Timaganiza kuti tikadziwa zambiri zokhudza anthu a ku Africa kuno m’pamene zingakhale zosavuta ku-ti tiziwalamulira. Komatu kufufuza . . .”

“Kufufuza n’kofunika,” anamudula mawu Winter-bottom, “komanso kudziwa zolondola n’kofunika. Vuto limene lili ndi atsogoleri athu ndi loti amamvera anthu olakwika n’kumanyalanyaza malangizo a anthu omwe akukudziwa bwino kuno, anthu omwe akhala kuno kwa nthawi yaitali.”

Clarke anakwiya kwambiri ndi Winterbottom posa-mulola kuti amalize zimene ankayankhula. Anadzipsera-nso mtima polephera kunena mfundoyo momveka bwino ngati mmene ankafunira.

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Ulendo woyamba umene Ezeulu anachoka pakhomo pake kungochokera pamene Chikondwerero cha Nkhwani chija chinachitika ndi pamene anapita kusuzumira bwenzi lake Akuebue. Iye anapeza mnzakeyo atakhala pansu mu *obi* wake kwinaku akukonza zilazi zomwe ankafuna kuti aganyu akamudzalire m'mawa wa tsiku lotsatira kumunda kwake. Akuebue anakhala pansu pakati pa zilazi zake mpeni wake wachigumbu chamtengo uli kumanja. Mulu waukulu unaunjikidwa kumanja kwake ndipo zilazi zina zinali m'dengu lalitali kumanzere kwake. M'dengumo ndi mmenekamatengamo chilazi chimodzichimodzi n'kumachiyanng'ana mosamala kwambiri kuti aone ngati chingakhale chambewu. Akaona kuti chili bwino ankagwiritsa ntchito mpeni uja podula mitsitsi, mphukira komanso nsonga za chilazicho. Kenako ankachiika pamulu waukulu uja.

Anthu awiriwa anapatsana moni wapachanza ndipo Ezeulu anatambasula chikopa chake chambuzi n'kuchikhallira. Akuebue anamufunsa zokhudza banja lake ndipo kwa kanthawi anapitirizabe kudula zilazi zija mokhala ngati alibe naye ntchito mlendo wakeyo.

"Ali bwino," anatero Ezeulu. "Nanga anthu a pakhomo pako pano ali bwanji?"

"Sakulongolola."

"Komatu anzathu muli ndi zilazi zabwino. Ndi zimene munakolola chaka chatha kapena mwazigula kumsi-

ka?”

“Kodi umawudziwa munda wanga womwe uli ku Anietiti uja . . . ? Kumeneko n’kumene kunatuluka zilazi zimenezi.”

“Koma ndiye ndi munda wabwinotu,” anatero Ezeulu kwinaku akugwedezero mutu wake. “Minda yachonde choncho imachititsa kuti alesi azioneka ngati alimi odziwa ntchito. Chimangadi chimalola wopanda mano.”

Akuebue anamwetulira. “Ndikudziwa kuti ukufuna kunditapa mkamwa, koma na ine ndekha ndiye wandilephera.” Kenako anaika panso mpeni wake uja n’kuitana mwana wake, Obielue, yemwe anayankha kuchokera kuseri ndipo posakhalitsa anatulukira.

“Ezeulu,” anatero atangofika popereka malonje ake.

“Mwana wanga.”

Kenako anatembenukira kwa bambo ake kuti amve chomwe amuitanira.

“Pita ukawauze mayi ako kuti kwabwera Ezeulu. Komanso ukawauze kuti ngati ali ndi kola akupatsire.”

Obielue anabwereranso kuseri kuja.

“Ngakhale sindinadye kola nditapita kunyumba kwake ndimupatsabe nanga nditani.” Akuebue anadziyankhula yekha.

Ezeulu anaseka. “Kodi paga timati chiyani za munthu amene amati akadya n’kupukuta pakamwa pake n’kumauza anthu kuti sanadye kalikonse?”

“Kayatu!”

“Munthu woteroyo amasiya kupita kuchimbudzi. Kodi mayi ako sanakuuze zimenezi?”

Akuebue anadzuka mwapang’onopang’ono chifu-kwa cha ululu umene ankamva m’chiwuno mwake.

“Ukalambawu ndi matenda ndithu,” iye anatero akuyesetsa kuti aweramuke dzanja lake limodzi atagwira

m'chiwuno. Koma chifukwa cha ululuwo, iye anagonja moti sanakwanitse kuima tsonga. “Ndikakhala pansi kwa nthawi yaitali ndimachita kufunika kuphunziranso kuyenda ngati mwana.” Iye anamwetulira pamene ankayenda modzikoka kulowera kumene kunali kakhomo kakang’ono ka *obi* wakeyo ndipo kumeneko anakatenga mbale yogoba yomwe munali choko n’kupita kukaipereka kwa Ezeulu. Ezeulu anatolamo chokocho n’kulemba pansi mizere isanu. Mizere itatu inali yoima, iwiri inali yogona ndipo umodzi unali pamwamba, wina pansi pa mizere itatu yoima ija. Kenako anapaka chokocho pazala zamanthu zakumapazi kwake ndipo anajambulanso mnzere woyera kuzungulira diso lake lakumanzere.

Akuebue anali ndi akazi awiri, koma pa nthawiyi ndi mkazi m’modzi yekha amene anali pakhomo ndipo posakhalitsa anatulukira kuti adzapereke malonje kwa Ezeulu komanso kudzanena kuti mkazi wamkulu wachokapo. Mkazi wamkuluyo anali atapita kukayendera mitengo yake ya gwalangwa kuti akaone ngati zipatso zake zinali zitayamba kupsa. Kenako Obielue anatulukira atatenga kola. Iye anatenga mbale yogoba ija kuchokera kwa bambo ake, ndipo anaipemerera kuti achotse fumbi. Kenako anaikamo kola uja n’kuipereka kwa Ezeulu.

“Zikomo kwambiri,” anatero Ezeulu. “Pita nayo kwa bambo ako kuti akaswe kolayu.”

“Ayi,” anatero Akuebue. “Ndikufuna uswe iweyo.”

“Zimenezotu sizitheka. Ulemu woswa kolayu ndi wako. Pachikhalidwe chathu sitimazemba munthu panjira kenako n’kukalowa m’nyumba mwake. Kuswa kola pakhomo pako pano iwe ulipo n’chimodzimodzi kuchita zimenezi.”

“Ndikudziwa zimenezo,” anatero Akuebue, “koma wekhanso ukuona kuti manja angawa atanganidwa ndipo

ndapempha iweyo kuti uswe kolayo m'malo mwa ine.”

“Munthu samakhala wotanganidwa kwambiri mpa-ka kufika polephera kuswa kola woyambirira panyumba pake. Ika kaye pansi chilazicho, sichithawa ayi.”

“Komatu kola ameneyu si woyamba. Ndaswa kale mungapo chicheremu.”

“Ukhoza kukhala kuti waswadi kola wambirimбири, koma sunamuswe pamaso panga. Kapenatu nditabwera kuno sungandiphikire chakudya chifukwa choti waphikira ena angapo ine ndisanafike?”

“Chabwino basi,” anatero Akuebue. “Bweretsani kolayo ndiswe.”

“Iswani ndithu bambo. Chinthu chomwe tatokosera m'makutu sitimachiikanso m'maso. Kola amene mwato-kosera m'makutu m'mawawu simungandipatse ine.”

Akuebue anatenga kola uja n'kunena kuti: “Tonse tikhale ndi moyo wautali,” kenako anaswa.

Mizinga iwiri ya mfuti inali italira m'deralo kungo-chokera pamene Ezeulu anafika pakhomopa. Tsopano mzinga winanso wachitatu unalinthimuka.

“Kodi kumene akuliza mfutiko kukuchitika chiya-ni?” anafunsa Ezeulu. “Kapenatu anthu ayamba kusaka m'makomo mwa anthu?”

“Kodi sunamve eti? Ogbuefi Amalu akudwalatu mwakayakaya.”

“Zoono? Ndiye zafika mpaka powomba mfuti?”

“Inde.” Akuebue anayankha motsitsa mawu chifu-kwa cha nkhani yomvetsa chisoni yomwe ankafuna kuyamba kuitambasula. “Kodi dzulo linali tsiku lanji?”

“Linali tsiku la *Eke*,” anayankha Ezeulu.

“Inde, linali tsiku la *Eke* la mlungu watha lomwe anayamba kudwala. Ogbuefi ankabwerera kwawo kucho-keru kumunda kokasosa ndipo matendawo anamukantha

ali munsewu. Pamene amakafika kwawo anali ali njenjenje. Komatu amanjenjemera chonchi dzuwa likuswa mtenngo. Amachita kulephera kugwira chikwanje chake, zala zitaumiratu ngati za mtembo.”

“Ndiye akuti vuto n’chiyani?”

“Malinga ndi zimene ndaona m’mawa walero komanso dzulo, ndikuganiza kuti ndi *arummo*.”

“Usabwerezenseo kunena zimenezo!”

“Koma sikuti zimene ndikukuzazi ndi zimene Nwokonkwo kapena Nwokafo wandiuza. Ndikunena zimene ndaona ndi maso angawa.”

Ezeulu anayamba kukukuta mano ake.

“Ndinapita kukamuona m’mawa walero. Akamapuma akumachita kukhala ngati lumo lobuntha likupala m’chifuwa mwake.”

“Ndiye apeza sing’anga wochokera kuti woti amupangire mtera?” anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Anaitanitsa Nwodika wa ku Umuofia. Achibale omwe analipo m’mawawu ndinawauza kuti ndikanakhalapo pamene amakambirana zoitanitsa munthu ameneyu ndikanawauza kuti apite ku Aninta. Kumeneko kuli ng’anga wina yemwe amachotsa matenda m’thupi mwa munthu pogwiritsa ntchito zala zake.”

“Komatu matenda amene akudwala mnzathuyu ndi matenda a mizimu ndipo palibe mankhwala omwe angamuchiritse, ndiye akuvutikirani kuitanitsa sing’anga?”

“Kayatu,” anatero Akuebue. “Komanso mogwirizana ndi zimene makolo athu ankanena, ngati munthu akudwala matenda a mizimu atalimba n’kukhalabe osamwalira mpaka milungu itatu kutha, timadziwa kuti mizimu yamumvera chisoni. Zonsezi ndi zoonza, komabe sitinganngopindidza manja athu n’kumaonerera munthu akulanguluzika ndi matendawa kwa milungu itatu yathunthu ife

osachitapo kanthu. Tiyenera kumachita zoyesayesa mpaka zimene tikuyembekezera kuti zichitikezo zitachitika. N’chifukwa chake ndinanena za ng’anga wa ku Aninta uja.”

“Ndikuganiza kuti ukunena Aghadike yemwe ena amangomuti Anyanafummo.”

“Mwalasa ndithu, ndi yemweyo.”

“Ndimadziwa asing’anga ambiri omwe ali mu Olu komanso mu Igbo yense. Koma Aghadike ndi sing’anga wamphamvu kwambiri. Komabe ngakhale iyeyo sanga-pulumutse munthu pankhondo yolimbana ndi matenda a mizimu. Kuchita zimenezo n’chimodzimodzi kulimbana ndi milungu.”

“Palibedi munthu amene angachite chibwana chanchombolende ngati chimenecho.” Kenako mfuti ija inaliranso.

“Komatu ine ndimaona kuti kuliza mfuti ngati kumeneku n’kuyesayesa kopanda nzeru,” anatero Ezeulu. “Kuteroku akuganiza kuti angathamangitse mizimu ndi phokoso la kulira kwa mfuti? Ndiyetu zikanakhala choncho bwenzi anthu omwe ali ndi makobidi akumagula migolomigolo ya zipolopolo kuti mizimu ikamafuna kute-nga moyo wawo aziipseza. Bwenzitu anthu okhupuka akumakhala moyo mpaka bowa kuyamba kuphukira pami-tu yawo. Ineyo ndikadzadwala anthu asadzayerekeze kundibweretsera sing’anga yemwe amadziwa zambiri za ule-nje. Ndidzafuna munthu wodziwa zitsamba. Ngati atadza-ndibweretsera sing’anga ngati ameneyu ndindzamulozera njira yakwawo n’kupeza wina yemwe angandithandize.”

Anthu awiriwo anadukiza kaye makambirano awo ndipo ankhala phe-e kwa kanthawi. Kenako Akuebue anati: “Koma mmene ndamuonera m’mawawu, ndikukayikira ngati dzuwa likamatuluka mawa atakhale akupu-

mabe.”

Ezeulu anayamba kuyendetsayendetsa mutu wake. Kenako anati: “Ndi nkhani yomvetsa chisoni kwambiri, koma nanga tipanga bwanji? Zagwa zatha basi!”

Akuebue anayambiranso kudula zilazi zija kwinaku akudziikira kumbuyo ponena mwambi wakuti, “m’nyengo yozizira, munthu amaperekera moni atakhala pambali pa moto.” Iye ankaona kuti mavutowo ali apo, kukonza zilazi kuti ukadzale n’kofunika kuti usadzagone nayo njala pamawa.

“Zimenezo ndi zimene anthu amtundu wathu amanena,” anayankha Ezeulu. “Komanso amanena kuti munthu amene wayendera mnzake akugwira ntchito salandiridwa ndi manja awiri.”

Kenako kunamvekanso kulira kwa mfuti ija ndipo Ezeulu mtima unayamba kumuwawa.

“Ndipita komweko ndikauze sing’angayo kuti ngati alibe mankhwala oti apatse wodwalayo, kuli bwino angosunga zipolopolo kuti zidzagwiritsidwe ntchito pamaliro ake.”

“Mwina akuganiza kuti zipolopolo ndi zotchipa ngati phulusa,” anatero Akuebue, ndipo kenako nkhope yake inasintha n’kuyamba kuonekera moopserako: “Ngati utadutsira kuti ukaone matendawo, usakayerekeze kunena chilichonse chomwe chingachititse anthu kuganiza kuti sukumufunira zabwino wodwalayo. Ndati ndikulangiziretu chifukwa ukakangotero akhoza kukakuuza kuti: ‘Kodi chofunika kwambiri n’chiyani pakati pa zipolopolo ndi moyo wa munthu?’”

Ezeulu sankafunika kuchita kuyang’ana nkhope ya wo-

dwalayo kuti azindikire kuti sangalimbe mpaka kudutsa masiku omwe mizimu imamvera munthu chisoni n'kumusiya wamoyo. Monga mmene Akuebue ananenera, zinali zokayikitsa kuti wodwalayo angaonenso kuwala kwa tsiku lotsatira.

Pachifuwa cha wodwalayo panali patapakidwa mankhwala omwe anamatilira n'kufika polimba ngati chikopa ndipo ena anali atawaika m'malo osiyanasiyana. Chipika chachikulu chinkanyeka pang'onopang'ono pafupi ndi kama wansungwi pomwe wodwalayo anagona ndipo fungo lamphamvu la mankhwala omwe anaponyedwa pamotopo linangoti gu m'nyumbamo. Wodwalayo akamapuma, zinkamveka ngati akuwaza chipika. Iye sanazindikire Ezeulu yemwe polowa anapereka moni ndi maso ake kwa anthu omwe anali m'nyumbamo n'kuyenda kupita pakama wa wodwalayo pomwe anaima kwa nthawi yaitali akumuyang'ana osanena chilichonse. Kenako ananyamuka n'kukakhala ndi kagulu ka achibale omwe ankayankhulana chapansipansi.

“Kodi munthuyu walakwa chiyani kuti adwale chonchi?” anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Nafenso takhala tikudzifunsa funso lomwelo,” anayankha m'modzi mwa anthu aja. “Tinangodabwa titalandira uthenga woti m'bale wathu akudwala mwakaya-kaya.”

Sing'anga uja anakhala pambali pa gulu la anthu aja ndipo sankayankhira nawo nkhani zomwe anthuwo ankakambirana. Ezeulu anaponya maso m'chipindacho n'kuona mmene sing'angayo anamangira linga lotetezera kuti mizimu isalowe m'nyumbamo. Kudenga kunkalendewera zikho zitatu zazitali zomwe kukamwa kwake kunatsekedwa ndi masamba ouma a nthochi. Chikho chachinayi chinali chamimba yaikulu chofanana ndi chomwe anthu

ankakonda kuika uchema. Chikho chimenechi chinkalendewera pafupi ndi wodwala uja. M'khosi mwa chikhochi munali khoza la zikamba zankhono komanso kaphukusi ka nthenga za mbalame ya chinkhwe. Nthengazo zinkasuzumira kuchokera m'chikhomo. Nkhuku ziwiri zanseme zinkalendewera m'mbali mwa chikhocho mitu italoza pansi.

Wodwalayo sankayankhula ndipo ankangomveka mpumo wokha. Koma mwadzidzidzi anayamba kubuula. Kubuulaku kutangoyamba, aliyense anasiya kaye kuyanakhula. Sing'anga uja, yemwe anali atadzilemba nzere ndi choko choyera kuzungulira diso lake limodzi komanso atavala khoza lachikopa mumkono wake wakumanzere, anaimirira n'kutuluka panja. Mfuti yake inali itaimikidwa pakhoma, kotulukira zipolopolo kutaloza m'mwamba.

Atatuluka anatola mfutiyo n'kuyamba kuchinyiramo onga wa mfuti. Ongawo unali m'mabotolo anayi a ngodya zinayi omwe ankaoneka kuti anali a masamba a tiyi wa azungu wotchedwa *Nje-nje*. Atamaliza kuika onga wo anazungulira kuseri kwa khumbilo ndipo anawomba mzinga. Nkhuku zonse zomwe zinali pabwalo zinabalalika ndipo zina zinkalira mokhala ngati zaona chilombo choopsa.

Pamene ankabwerera m'khumbi muja anapeza wodwala uja akungoti fulukutufulukutu, kwinaku akuyanakhula zosamveka.

"Takatengani *ofo* wake," anatero sing'angayo.

Mchimwene wa wodwalayo anapita kukatenga ndodo yaifupi mukachisi wapakhomopo. Ndodoyo ankaimangirira kudenga la kachisiyo ndi chingwe. Ng'angayo yemwe tsopano anali atawerama pambali pa wodwalayo, analandira ndodoyo ndipo kenako anaitenga n'kumufumbatitsa wodwalayo m'manja.

“Uigwire ndodoyi!” iye analamula wodwalayo. “Igwire mwamphamvu ndipo uuze mizimuyo kuti sukufuna! Wamva zimene ndanenazi? Uiuze kuti ayi!”

Zimene sing’angayo ankanena zinayamba kukhazikika m’mutu mwa wodwalayo ndipo anayambadi kupinda mwapang’onopang’ono zala zake zouma ngati za khwangwala, n’kumafumbata ndodoyo.

“Eya-a,” anatero sing’angayo akuchotsa dzanja lake n’kusiya *ofo* uja m’dzanja la Amalu kuti afumbate bwino nobwino ndodoyo. “Uiuze kuti sukufuna!”

Koma atangochotsa dzanja lakelo, zala za Amalu zinafutukuka ndipo ndodoyo inagwera pansi. Anthu anali m’khumbimo anayamba kuyang’anizana modabwa zipumi zawo zitalembekalembeka ndi nkawa yaikulu.

Kenako Ezeulu anaimirira n’kutsanzika. “Inutu mutsale bwino. Pitirizani kusamalira wodwalayu.”

“Muyende bwino,” anatero achibale aja.

Pamene mkazi wa Obika ankafika pakhomo pa Ezeulu ndi anthu omuperekeza, Obika sankakhulupirira kuti zinatheka bwanji kuti amulole kubwerera kwawo pamene anabwera ulendo wapita. Iye ankadziwa kuti ndi anyamata owerengeka amene ankadikira kuti mwambo waukwati uchitike kaye, kuti atenge mkazi wawo. Koma Obika ankaonabe kuti kutsatira mwambo n’kofunika. Iye ankamva bwino mumtima akaganizira nzeru zimene anasonyeza pamenepa. Mumtima mwake ankanena kuti anthu akufunika kumuyamikira posonyeza kudziiletsa ndipo ngati sangatero ankaona kuti sachitiranso mwina koma kudziitamandira yekha ngati mmene buluzi wina anachitira atagwa kuchokera mumtengo wautali kwambiri wa *iroko*

n'kukafika pansi osathyola fupa ngakhale limodzi. Buluziyo ananena kuti ngati sipapezeka wina womutamanda, ayamba kudzitamandira yekha.

Mkaziyo anaperekezedwa ndi mayi ake omwe anali akungowongokera kumene ku matenda omwe anawagoneka pamphasa kwa masabata angapo. Iye anaperekezedwanso ndi atsikana ambiri anthanga yake komanso azinzawo a mayi ake. Ambiri mwa azimayiwo anadendekera mitanga ya mituka yomwe ankafuna kuti banja latsopanololo likayambire moyo wabanja. Ananyamula miphika, mithiko, masache, mtondo, mwisi, dengi, mphasa, zipande, miphika yodzaza ndi mafuta a gwalangwa, dengi la koko, nsomba zofutsa, chinangwa choviikaviika, kabaifa, komanso mchere ndi tsabola. Anatenganso nsalu, mbale ziwiri komanso poto wachitsulo. Zinthu zinayi zimenezi zinali zobwera ndi azungu ndipo anachita kuzigula kukantini yatsopano ku Okperi.

Pakhomo pa Ezeulu panali patadzaza kale achibale komanso anthu ena pamene mkwatibwiyo ankafika. Atsikana makumi awiri, mwinanso kuposa pamenepo, ankamusamalira mkwatibwiyo ndipo onse anali atadzikongolletsa mochititsa kaso. Koma mkwatibwiyo ndi amene ankaoneka wokongola kwambiri kuposa onsewo. Sikuti ankasiyana nawo kwambiri kokha chifukwa chakuti anali wamtali, koma chifukwa choti anali wokongola motukwanitsa. Iye anali atamanga mangongo okongola omwe anali chizindikiro choti wakula tsopano ndipo akuyembekezeredwa kusenya udindo wokhala mayi wapakhomo. Kamangidwe ka tsitsi kameneka kankakhala kosiyanana ndi kamene atsikana ogwa m'dothi komanso mbeta zothirathira thendo kale zinkamanga popota tsitsi lawo n'kulidulira ndi lumu.

Atsikana aja ankaimba nyimbo yotchedwa *Ifeoma*.

Nyimboyi inkanena kuti pakhomopo pafika mkazi yemwe ndi chinthu chamtengo wapatali kwambiri, ndipo aliyense amene ali ndi kanthu apite kukamufupa.

Atsikanawo anaima mozungulira mkwatibwiyo ndipo iye ankavina nyimbo ankamuimbirayo. Pamene ankavina, Obika limodzi ndi achibale ena a Ezeulu anayamba kulowa m'bwalo m'modzim'modzi kapena awiria-wiri n'kumakafupa mtsikanayo pomuika ndalama pachipumi. Mtsikanayo ankamwetulira ndipo ndalamazo zinkagwera pamapazi ake. Mmodzi mwa atsikana omusamalira aja ankatola ndalamazo n'kuziika m'mbale.

Dzina la mkwatibwiyo linali Okuata. Okuata anali wantali ngati bambo ake omwe anali m'banja la anthu a matupi akuluakulu ngati Anefili. Nkhope yake inali yowumbika bwino ndipo anthu ena anali atayamba kale kumunena kuti Oyilidie chifukwa cha kukongola kwake. Nawonso mawere ake anali njo ngati mbola za njuchi ndipo zinali zokayikitsa kuti pa nthawi ina adzafota n'kufika poti akamayenda kumachita khwaphalakhwaphala ngati mmene amachitira a azimayi otopa ndi uchembere.

Tsitsi lake linali litakonzedwa m'njira yatsopano yotchedwa *otimili*. Linamangidwa mizere isanu ndi itatu ya zingongo zogundana zomwe zinadutsa kuchokera kunkhongo mpaka pachipumi. Kutsogoloko tsitsilo linanyamuka pang'ono n'kumaoneka ngati kamulu ka minga zitalizitali. Iye anavala mikanda khumi ndi isanu m'chiwuno mwake. Mikandayi inkatchedwa *jigida*. Yambiri mwa mikanda imeneyi inali yofiira ngati magari, koma ingapo inali yakuda. Ndiponso ina mwa mikanda yofiirayo inali itapakizidwa ndi tizinthu tina takuda mwa apa ndi apo. Tsiku lotsatira mkwatibwiyo ankayenera kumanga chilundu m'chiwuno monga chizindikiro choti tsopano ndi mkazi wokwatiwa. Kungochokera pamenepo thupi lake

linkayenera kumaonedwa ndi mwamuna wake basi. Pamene Okuata ankavina, mikanda ya *jigida* ija inkaweyeseka. Mikandayo inkaphimba chiwuno chake chonse mpaka chamumchombo. Atsikana ena aja anavalanso mofananamo, kungoti iwowo anavala mikanda yocheperapo.

Kenako kunachitika madyerero omwe anafika mpaka madzulo. Kunali miphika yodzaza ndi zilazi, *foofoo*, masamba owawasa, ndiwo zotchedwa *egusi* komanso mang'ina a mbuzi. Panalinso nsomba za *asa* komanso madende a uchema wotsekemera.

Mbale za chakudya chopatsa mudyo zikangotulutsidwa n'kukaikidwa pamene panali azimayi aja, nthawi yomweyo ankayamba kuimba mothokoza komanso mote-temula omwe awapatsa chakudyacho:

“Kwo-kwo-kwo-kwo-kwo!”

Kwo-o-o-oh!

Koma lero kuli kudya.

Ndani wapereka chakudyachi?

Kaya-a-a!

Ndani wapereka chakudyachi?

Kaya-a-a!

Obika Ezeulu ndiye wapereka

Ayo-o-o-o-o-oh!

Phwandoli litatha, mayi a mtsikanayo limodzi ndi anthu onse omwe anabwera nawo aja ananyamuka n'kubwerera kwawo ndipo anamusiya Okuata akukhala ngati nkukhu yadzoye. Iye analephera kudzigwira moti mpaka anayamba kukheta misozi. Apongozi ake anamutenga n'kupita naye m'khumbi momwe ankayenera kukadikirira mpaka nthawi yokapereka nsembe itakwana.

Munthu wina wodziwa zitsamba anapemphedwa

kuti adzatsogolerere mwambo wopereka nsembeyo ndipo posakhalitsa anatulukira. Nsembeyo inkayenera kukaperekedwa pamphambano ya nsewu wopita kumudzi womwe Okuata anachokera. Posakhalitsa gulu la anthu okapereka nsembeyo linanyamuka. Pagululi panali Obika, mchimwene wake wamkulu Edogo, mayi ake komanso Okuata. Ezeulu sanapite nawo chifukwa mdima unali utayamba. Malinga ndi mfundo zomwe ankayendera, iye sankaye-rekeza kutuluka mu *obi* wake kunja kukangogwa mdima. Oduche anakana kupita nawo chifukwa ankaopa kukhumudwitsa mphunzitsi wakutchalitchi chake yemwe sankagwirizana ndi miyambo yachikunja ngati imeneyi.

Gulu lokapereka nsembelo linalowa munsewu waukulu wolowera ku Umuezeani, komwe Okuata anachokera. Mdima unali utakuta dziko ndipo kunalibe ngakhale mwezi. Nyali ya koloboyi yomwe mayi a Obika ananyamula inkawala monyinyirika mumdimawo. Iwo anali ataphimba lawi la nyaliyo ndi dzanja lawo kuti lisazime ndi mphepo. Ngakhale anachita zimenezi, maulendo awiri koloboyiyo anazima ndipo anapita kukayatsa nawo kunyumba zapafupi. Ulendo woyamba anazima ali pafupi ndi nyumba ya Anosi ndipo ulendo wachiwiri anazima ali pafupi ndi nyumba ya mkazi wa malemu Membolu.

Munthu wodziwa zitsamba uja, yemwe dzina lake linali Aniegboka, ankangoyenda mwakachetechete kutso-golo kwa gululo. Iye anali wathupi losayamikira chakudya komanso wamfupi zedi ngati bathwa. Koma akamayanikhula, mawu ake ankamveka ngati chiphaliwali moti ngakhale munthu yemwe ali patali ankatha kumumva bwino bwino. Aniegboka anali m'modzi mwa anthu odziwa mitsitsi m'deralo. Iye anasankhidwa chifukwa ankagwirizanako ndi Ezeulu. Ndipo ngakhale akanakhala kuti sadziwa kwenikweni zitsamba, akanatha kupereka nse-

mbeyi chifukwa dongosolo lake linal losavuta. Ana am'makomo ambiri ankamudziwa bwino ng'angayu ndipo akawayandikira ankamuthawa chifukwa ankakhulupirira kuti akhoza kusandutsa munthu kukhala galu pongo-mumenya m'matako ndi dzanja lake. Koma akangochoka, anawo anakonda kumujeda chifukwa cha diso lake lang'ala. Zimamveka kuti diso limeneli linawonongeka pamene ankaseweretsa chintengo chosongoka chomwe ankachiponya m'mwamba n'kumachiwakha chisanagwere pansi. Ndiye mwangozi, analemphera kuchiwakha ndipo chintengocho chinafikira padiso moti anavulala kwambiri mpaka kuchita ng'ala. Zimenezi zinachitika ali mwana.

Pamene gululi linkayenda linakumana ndi anthu angapo omwe ankawazindikira akamva mawu awo. Lawi la koloboyi uja linkachititsa kuti mdima ukule kwambiri moti ankavutika kuona anthu amene akubwera kutsogolo. Ndi anthuwo omwe ankawaona bwinobwino.

Akamayenda pankamveka phokoso kuchokera m'chikwama chachikulu chachikopa chomwe Aniegboka anakoleka paphewa. Okuata ananyamula mbale yadothi komanso nkuku. Nthawi ndi nthawi nkukuyo inkalira kwinaku ikuphiriphitha. Pamene ankayenda pakati pa gululo, Okuata anali ndi chimwemwe kuti wakwatiwa, koma pa nthawi imodzimodziyo ankadanso nkhuwa kwambiri. Obika ndi Edogo omwe ankatsogolera njira, anali atanyamula zikwanje m'manja mwawo. Anyamatawa ankayankhulana mwa apa ndi apo, koma zinkaoneka kuti maganizo a Obika anali kwina.

Makutu ake anali tcheru kumvetsera kulira kwa *jigida* wa Okuata.

Iye ankathanso kusiyanitsa mtswatswa wa mapazi a Okuata ndi ena onse omwe anali pagululo. Zikuoneka kuti

nayenso Obika anali ndi nkhwawa. Iye ankadzifunsa kuti, kodi akamutenga mkaziyo n’kupita naye kukhumbi lake akapeza kuti ndi namwali, kapena akapeza kuti njovu zinawononga kale? Bwanji ngati atakapeza kuti si namwali? Maganizo ena ankabwera m’mutu mwake kuti zimenezo sizingatheke.

Mtsikanayu anali ndi mbiri yabwino ndipo sankakayikira kuti anasunga khosi lake kuti adzavale mkanda woyera.

Obika anali atasankha kale mbuzi yathanzi kuti akapereke kwa makolo a mkaziyo ngati atamupeza adakali namwali. Koma sankadziwa kuti achita chiyani akazindikira zoti mtsikanayo anayendapo ndi amuna ena moti sakufunikanso kuwapatsa mphatsoyo.

Obika anapitirizabe kuyenda atanyamulanso mphika waung’ono wa madzi kudzanja lake lamanzere. Edogo anatenga makhwaule a kunsonga a mtengo wa gwala-ngwa. Posakhalitisa anafika pamphambano ya njira yopita kwawo kwa Okuata yomwe anadutsa pamene ankabwera. Iwo anatenga njirayo n’kuyenda pang’ono ndipo kenako anaima. Ng’anga uja anasankha malo pakati pa nsewuwo ndipo anapempha Obika kuti akumbepo dzenje.

“Nyaliyo siyani apa,” ng’angayo anatero kwa mayi a Obika. Obika anatenga khasu n’kuyamba kukumba.

“Ulikulitse pang’ono,” anatero ng’angayo.

“Eya-a, choncho.” Ng’angayo, Obika ndi Edogo anali atawerama ndipo azimayi anali atabzala mawondo awo pansi. Lawi la koloboyi uja linkawala ndi mphamvu tsopano.

“Basi lakwana limenelo,” anatero ng’angayo. “Ingochotsamo dothilo.”

Pamene Obika ankachotsa dothi lakatondolo ndi manja ake, ng’angayo anayamba kutulutsa zipangizo zo-

perekera nsembe kuchokera m'chikwama chake. Choyamba anatulutsa zilazi zing'onozing'ono zinayi. Anatulutsanso choko chinayi ndiponso zitsamba zinazake.

“Ndipatsireni *omu*.”

Edogo anapereka makhwaule a gwalangwa aja. Ng'angayo anakhadzula masamba angapo ndipo anataya ena otsalawo. Kenako anatembenukira kwa mayi a Obika.

“Ndipatseni *ego-nano*.”

Mayiwo anamasula phukusi la zikamba kuchokera pachilundu chawo n'kupereka. Ng'angayo analandira zikambazo n'kuziwerenga mosamala kwambiri monga mmene mayiwo anachitiranso pamene ankazigula kumsika. Zikambazo zinkagulitsidwa ngati mulu ndipo zinkakhalapo zisanu ndi chimodzi. Ng'angayo anapeza kuti panali magulu anayi ndipo atakhutira kuti zakwana anagwe-dezera mutu.

Kenako anaimirira n'kukagwira dzanja la Okuata n'kumuuzza kuti agwade pambali pa dzenje lija moyang'ana njira ya kumudzi kwawo. Ng'angayo anaima moyang'anizana ndi mtsikanayo mbali ina ya dzenjelo. Zinthu zoperekera nsembe zija zinali pansi kudzanja lake lamanja. Ena onse anaima kumbuyo kwake.

Ng'angayo anatenga chilazi chimodzi n'kumupatsa Okuata.

Okuata analandira chilazicho n'kuchizunguliza kumutu kwake ndipo kenako anachiika m'dzenje muja.

Ng'angayo anatenga zilazi zotsala zija n'kuziikanso m'dzenjemo. Kenako anatenga choko choyera chimodzi ndipo Okuata anachitanso mofanana ndi mmene anachitira ndi chilazi chija. Atamaliza kuchita zimenezi anapatsidwa masamba a gwalangwa ndiponso zitsamba zija. Pamapeto pake anamupatsa gulu limodzi la zikamba zija, zomwe anazigwira m'dzanja lake n'kuzungulitsa mutu wake

kenako n'kupyera m'dzenje muja. Atachita izi, nganga uja ananena kuti:

“Choipa chilichonse chimene unaona ndi maso ako, kapena kuyankhula ndi pakamwa pako, kumva ndi makutu ako kapena kuponda ndi mapazi ako komanso choipa chilichonse chimene makolo ako anachibweretsa pa iwe, ndikuchikwirira pamalo awa.”

Pamene ankayankhula mawu amenewa, anatenga mphika n'kuuvundikiza padzenje lija. Kenako anayamba kuukwirira ndi dothi. Kawiri konse anasindikiza pansi mphikawo womwe unkaonekera pang'ono.

“Kodi madzi aja ali kuti?” anafunsa ng'angayo.

Mayi a Obika anapereka mphika wodzaza ndi mazi.

Mkwatibwi uja yemwe tsopano anali ataimirira, anawerama n'kuyamba kusukusula ndipo anatsuka nkhope, manja komanso miyendo yake mpaka m'mawondo.

“Usaiwale,” anatero ng'angayo mtsikanayo atamaliza kusukusula kuja, “kuti sukuyenera kudutsa njira iyi mpaka kutacha m'mawa. Uyenera kuchita zimenezi ngakhale zitakhala kuti asilikali a ku Abam ayamba kupha anthu m'mudzimu ndipo iweyo ukuthawa kuti upulumutse moyo wako.”

“Mulungu wathu wamkulu sangalole kuti athawe pofuna kupulumutsa moyo wake, kaya ndi lero kapena mawa,” anatero apongozi ake aakazi aja.

“Tikudziwa kuti zimenezi sizingachitike,” anatero Aniegboka, “koma akuyenerabe kudziwa zimenezi malinga ndi mwambo wathu.” Kenako anatembenukira kwa Obika n'kumuuza kuti: “Ndachita zonse zimene munandituma. Mkazi wako ndi ameneyu. Sitikukayikira kuti akuberekera ana aamuna ambirimbiri.”

“Tathokoza kwambiri, muzigona kutali ndi moto

mungapse,” anatero Obika ndi Edogo mogwirizana.

“Nkhuku yokhayi inditsatira kunyumba,” anatero ng’angayo kwinaku akuponya chikwama chake chija paphewa. Kenako anatola nkhuku ija yomwe inamangidwa ndi chanthochi. N’kutheka kuti anaona m’mene maso anamuyang’anira.

“Ine ndekha ndi amene ndikuyenera kudya nkhu-kuyi. Pasapezeke munthu wobwera kwathu kudzadikiza chifukwa ngakhale abwere sindidzam’gaira.” Kenako anaseka mwaphokoso zedi ngati mbiyang’ambe. “Nayenso sing’anga amafunika kupatsidwa malipiro a ntchito imene wagwira.”

Kenako anasekanso kwambiri. “Kodi si paja pali mwambi wakuti wam’kachisi amadya zam’kachisi?”

“Zimene mukunenazo ndi zoonza ndithu,” Anayan-kha Edogo.

Pamene ankabwerera kumudzi kuja, ng’angayo ankangokhalira kulongolola. Iye ankadzitama kuti amadziwa mankhwala komanso kuti mbiri yake inamveka ponseponse mpaka m’madera akutali kwambiri. Anthu ena aja ankangomumvetsera ndi khutu limodzi ndipo mwa apa ndi apo ankamuyankha. Munthu yekhayo amene sanatsegule pakamwa pake anali Okuata.

Atafika ku *Ilo Agbasioso*, ng’angayo analekana nawo ndipo anatenga nsewu wakwawo. Atangozimiririka, Obika anafunsa ngati zinali zoyenera kuti atenge nkhuku yoperekedwa nsembe ija kuti akakhwasule mkamwa.

“Ndinamvapo kuti ena amachita zimenezo,” anatero mayi ake. “Koma lerolo ndi loyamba kuona zikuchitika. Nkhuku yomwe inaperekedwa nsembe pa tsiku la ukwati wanga inakwiridwa panso limodzi ndi nsembe zina zonse.”

“Koma ine ndiye sindinayambe ndamvapo,” anate-

ro Edogo. “Zikuoneka kuti munthu uja ndi wadyera moti amangotenga chilichonse chimene chamuphwekera.”

“Udindo wathu unali kupereka nkhuku,” anatero mayi a Obika, “ndipo ife tachita mbali yathu.”

“Koma ine ndiye ndinangotsala pang’ono kumugwira pakhosi.”

“Ayi mwana wanga. Unachita bwino kungomusiya. Ino si nthawi yomakokanakokana ndi munthu.”

Atafika kunyumba kuja Obika ndi mkazi wake, Okuata, anapita kaye ku *obi* wa Ezeulu.

“Bambo, kodi chikhalidwe chathu chimalola kuti sing’anga atenge nkhuku yomwe imayenera kuperekedwa nsembe?” anafunsa Obika kwa bambo ake.

“Ayi mwana wanga. Kuteroko ukufuna kundiuza kuti Aniegboka watenga nkhuku yansembe ija?”

“Tangoganizani! Ndimafuna kumuonetsa polekera, amayi ndi omwe anandiletsa.”

“Zimene Aniegboka wachita ndi zosayenera. Koma sikuti ndi zodabwitsa kwenikweni chifukwa kunja kuno kuli anthu ena omwe amakhala adyera kwambiri. Anthu amenewa amakhala ndi mimeru italiitali moti akaona chakudya safuna kuchisiya. Ambiri omwe amachita zimenezi amakhala asing’anga.” Ezeulu anaona mmene nkhope ya Obika inasinthira. Aka kanali koyamba kumuona atakhudzika ndi nkhani moteromo.

“Tenga mkazi wakoyu upite naye kunyumba kwako. Usalole kuti nkhani imeneyi ikusowetse mtendere. Ngati sing’anga wankhwiru ngati fisi watenga nkhuku yomwe imayenera kuperekedwa nsembe, musiyeni atenge. Mlandu ukhala pakati pa iyeyo ndi *chi* wake. Bola ife tachita mbali yathu pomupatsa chifuyo choperekera nsembe.”

Pamene Obika ndi mkazi wake ankapita kunyumba

kwawo, mtima wa Ezeulu unkangodumphadumphapha ndi chisangalalo chomwe sichinkapezekapezeka m'masiku amenewo. Kodi ukwati unali utayamba kale kumusinthira Obika? Zikanakhala kuti sing'anga uja anachita zimenezo m'mbuyomo, Obika sakanayamba wafunsa kaye bambo ake zoyenera kuchita. N'kutheka kuti zimene Akuebue ankanena zinali zooni. Iye anakonda kunena kuti Obika akadzangolowa m'banja adzasiyiratu zibwana zonse. Maganizo enanso anabwera m'mutu mwa Ezeulu omwe anatindika mfundo imeneyi: Likanakhala kale, Obika akanangogwira sing'angayo n'kuyamba kumuwaza makofi akumuza kuti akwirire nkhekuyo. Ndi maganizo amenewa, nkhope aya Ezeulu inangoti mwee.

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Ana onse a pakhomo pa Ezeulu ankafuna kupita nawo kumadzi m'mawa wa tsiku limeneli chifukwa mkazi watsopano wa Obika ankapita nawo. Ngakhale Obiageli yemwe anakana kupita kumtsinje chifukwa choopa kuba-yidwa ndi miyala yakuthwa munsewu, patsikuli anatulutsa mtsuko wake. Koyamba pamoyo wake, Obiageli analirira kumadzi. Koma mayi ake anamuuza kuti atsale kuti azisamalira mwana wa Amoge.

Mchemwali wamng'ono wa Obika, Ojiugo, ankangoti jijirijijiri ndi udindo wotsogolera mlamu wakeyo. Ngakhale anali mtsikana wamng'ono, iye ndi amene ankadziwa makona onse a khumbi la mayi ake kuposa aliyense pakhomopo. Nawonso mayi a Ojiugo, a Matefi, ankachitanso chimodzimodzi, kungoti sankafuna kuonetsera zime-nezi. Koma pamene ankachita izi, m'pamenenso ankao-nekera kwambiri. N'zosachita kufunsa kuti ankafuna kusonyeza mkazi mnzawoyo kuti ndi chinthu chamtengo wapatali kukhala ndi mtengwa pakhomo pako kusiyana ndi kumangokhalira kugula zigangiri za mnyanga wanjovu ana ako akungogona nayo njala.

“Mukaonetsetse kuti musakachedwe kumadziko,” anatero Matefi kwa mwana wakeyo komanso kwa mkazi wa mwana wake uja, “malovu omwe ndikulavulira pansiswa asanaume mukhale mutabwerako kumeneko, mwamva!” Kenako analavulira pansi.

“Komatu enafe tikufuna tikasambe,” anatero Nwafo. “Kapenatu mukufuna tikangotunga madzi, n’kumbwerako tisanasambe . . .”

“Iwetu wazungulira mutu,” anatero mayi a Nwafo omwe ankaoneka kuti ankakhala ngati sakumva zimene mkazi mnzawo uja ankanena.

“Ingoyerekeza kukabwera kumadziko thupi lakolo lili dokodoko choncho uone. Tidzaona kuti misala yaikulu ndi yandani pakati pa ya iwe ndi ya ine.” Mmene anatsindikira mawu amenewa sizinkagwirizana ndi kukula kwa nkhanayi. Kunena zoonika sikuti anakwiya ndi zimene mwana wakeyo ananena ayi, koma chifukwa cha mnyozo womwe mkazi mzakeyo ankamuchitira posamuitana kuti apite nawo kumadzi ndi gulu lomwe linali ndi mkwatibwi watsopanoyo.

“Kodi n’chifukwa chiyani ukuyenda ngati bongololo?” Matefi anafunsa mwana wake wamkazi. “Kodi ntchito imene mutagwire lero ingokhala kupita kumadziko basi?”

Oduche anali atavala nsalu yamizeremizere ya m’chiwuno komanso kamalaya kake komwe ankavala akamapita kutchalitchi kapena kusukulu. Zimenezi zinangowonjezera mkwiyo womwe mayi ake aja anali nawo kwa Nwafo, koma anakwanitsa kudzigwira moti sananene chilichonse atamuona.

Posakhalitsa gulu lopita kumadzilo linachoka ndipo Obiageli anafika pakumbi la Ezeulu atabereka mwana wa Amoge kumbuyo. Zinkachita kuonekeratu kuti mwanayo wamukulira moti ngakhale anamubereka, miyendo yake inangotsala pang’ono kuyamba kukhwekhwerekera pansi.

“Anthu amenewa ndi amisala kwambiri,” anatero Ezeulu. “Ndi ndani amene wasiya mwana akudwalaya m’manja mwako? Pita naye kwa mayi ake msanga.”

“Ndipita naye,” anatero Obiageli.

“Kodi ndi ndani amene wanyamula mnzake pame-
nepa? Ndati pita naye kwa mayi ake!”

“Apitatu kumadzi,” anayankha Obiageli akuyenda
movutikira kuyesetsa kuti mwana anamuberekayo asa-
gwere pansi. “Koma ndikhoza kukafika naye bwinobwino,
ndimathatu kubereka mwana ine, mwaona!”

“Ndikudziwa kuti ukhoza kukafika naye,” anatero
Ezeulu, “koma usaiwale kuti mwanayo akudwala, ndiye
usamangomukhutchumulakhutchumula. Pita naye kwa
mayi ake.”

Obiageli anagwedezera mutu ndipo analowa ku-
mpanda, koma Ezeulu ankadziwa kuti Obiageli wabere-
kabe mwanayo (yemwe tsopano anali atayamba kulira).
Mawu aang’ono a Obiageli anayamba kumveka mokhala
ngati akufuna kumiza mawu a mwana ankalarayo ndipo
ankamuimbira nyimbo kuti agone:

“Auze amayi mwana wawo akulira
Auze amayi mwana wawo akulira
Kuti amukonzere nsuzi wa *uziza*
Kuti amukonzere nsuzi wa *uziza*
Amupangire nsuzi wamadzimadzi wotsira tsabola
Kuti mbalame zazing’ono zomwe zingaumwe
Zife zonse ndi chidikhodikho
Mbuzi yalowa munkhokwe
Zilazi zonse zili pachiopsezo
Tonde walowa munkhokwe
Zilazi zonse zidibwa
Kodi waona mphalapala ikubwera apoyo
Taona! Yaviika mwendo umodzi m’madzi
Njoka yaluma mwendowo!
Kenako yathawitsa mwendowo m’madzimo

Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!

Iwe mphamba yoyendayenda

Takulandira kunyumba kuno

Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!

Koma kodi muyezo uli kuti?

Muyezo wachilundu changa uli kuti?

Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!”

“Nwafo! . . . Nwafo!” anaitana Ezeulu.

“Nwafotu nayenso wapita kumadzi!” anayankha mayi ake kuchokera kukhumbi lawo.

“Mwati Nwafo watani?” anatero Ezeulu mokwiya.

Ugoye anaganiza zopita mu *obi* momwemo kuti akafotokoze bwinobwino kuti Nwafo wapita kumadziko mwa kufuna kwake.

“Palibe amene anamuza kuti apite kumadzi,” anatero Ugoye.

“Palibe amene anamuza kuti apite kumadzi,” anatero mokwiya Ezeulu akuyerekezera kuyankhula ngati mwana. “Koma umadziwa kuti iye uja ndi amene amasesa pabwalo la *obi* wangayu m’mawa uliwonse? Kapena ukuyembekezera kuti ndiswe kola ndiponso kulandira alendo m’nyumba muno muli vwii chonchi? Kodi bambo ako ankaswa kola woyamba m’nyumba mwawo muli phulusa ladzulo? Malodza onse amene mumachita anthu inu muona nawo polekera. Ngati Nwafo wayamba kukula mphamvu mpaka kusiya kukumvera bwanji osamuza Oduche kuti adzasese m’nyumba mwanga muno?”

“Nayensotu Oduche wapita nawo limodzi.”

Ezeulu anangosankha kuti asayankhulenso. Mkazi wakeyo anatuluka ndipo posakhalitsa anatulukiranso atanyamula masache awiri. Anasesa m’khumbimo ndi tsache lamlaza ndipo kenako anayamba kusesa pabwalo ndi

tsache lolimba la *okeakpa*.

Posakhalitsa Obika anatuluka m'khumbi mwake pamene Ugoye ankasesa pabwalo paja ndipo anafunsa kuti: “Kodi nanunso mwayamba kusesa *iru-ezi* masiku ano? Nwafo ali kuti?”

“Palibe amene amabadwa tsache lili kumanja ake,” Ugoye anayankha monyansidwa ndipo kenako anapitiriza kusesako akuimba mokweza kwambiri ngati sakufuna kumvanso zomwe wina akuyankhula. Chifukwa cha kutalika kwa tsache lija, ankangokhala ngati akutakasa phala munkhali yaikulu yapaukwati. Ezeulu ataona zimenezo anamwetulira.

Pamene ankamaliza kusesako anali ataunjika mulu umodzi waukulu wa zinyalala ndipo kenako anazinyamula n'kupita nazo kumunda wake womwe ankafuna kubzalako koko chaka chimenecho.

Akuebue anakonza zoti akayendere Ezeulu pambuyo pa chakudya chake cham'mawa kuti akamuyamikire chifukwa cha ukwati wa mwana wake. Koma analinso ndi nkhani yofunika imene ankafuna kukambirana naye. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake anasankha kupita m'mawa—alendo ena osakasaka uchema asanayambe kuchita zochi-zochi pakhomopo. Zimene Akuebue ankafuna kukakambirana ndi Ezeulu sizinali zachilendo. Anali atakambiranapo nkhaniyo maulendo osawerengeka m'mbuyomo. Koma m'masiku apitawo, Akuebue anayamba kumva nkhani ina yomwe inayamba kumudetsa nkhuwa kwambiri. Nkhani yake inali yokhudza mwana wachitatu wa Ezeulu, Oduche, yemwe Ezeulu anamutumiza kuti akaphunzire zinsinsi za matsenga a azungu. Akuebue anka-

kaikira kuti Ezeulu anachita zimenezi mutu wake ukugwira. Kungochokera pachiyambi penipeni, Ezeulu anamutsimikizira kuti kuchita zimenezo n'kofunika kwambiri. Koma tsopano nkhani imeneyi inkagwiritsidwa ntchito ndi adani a Ezeulu ponyazitsa dzina lake. Anthu ankafunsa kuti: “Ngati Mkulu Wansembe wafika potumiza mwana wake kwa anthu omwe amapha ndi kudya nsato zopatulika komanso kuchita zinthu zauchiwanda zambirimбири, kodi akuyembekezera kuti anthu ena atani? Kodi buluzi yemwe anasokoneza maliro a mayi ake akanayembekezeranso kuti anthu ena aperekeze mwaulemu kumanda thupi la mayi ake?”

Ndiyeno nayenso mwana wamkulu wa Ezeulu anali atayamba kugwirizana ndi anthu amenewa, n'kukhala kumbali yotsutsana ndi bambo ake. Iye anapita kwa Akuebue tsiku lapita n'kukamuuzza kuti apite kwa Ezeulu, yemwe anali mnzake wapamtima, kuti akayankhule naye mosa-bisa mawu.

“Chachitika n'chiyani?”

“Munthu ayenera kulunzanitsa banja lake, osati kumabzala chisokonezo mwa ana ake.” Edogo ankati akakhumudwa ankachita chibwibwi kwambiri. Iye Anayankhula mawu amenewa akubwibwitsa.

“Yankhula modekha ndikumva.”

Edogo anamuuzza kuti chifukwa chimene Ezeulu anatumizira Oduche kuchipembedzo chatsopano chija ndi choti ankafuna kuti pasapezeke wina yemwe angadzalimbane ndi Nwafo pa nkhani yokhala Mkulu Wansembe.

“Ndi ndani amene wakuuzza zimenezo?” anafunsa Akuebue. Koma Edogo asanayankhe, Akuebue anawonjezera kuti: “Wanena za Nwafo ndi Oduche, nanga bwanji iweyo ndi Obika?”

“Obika samafuna kukhala Mkulu Wansembe, nga-

khalenso ineyo.”

“Komatu Ulu akamasankha wansembe sayamba wafunsa munthu. Ngati akufuna iweyo adzasankha iweyo. Akhozanso kusankha amene wapita kuchipembedzo chatsopanoyo. Ngati Ulu akufuna ameneyo palibe amene angamuletse.”

“Zoonu,” anatero Edo. “Koma chimene chimanndidetsa nkhwana n’choti bambo anga aja amachititsa kuti Nwafu azidzimva kuti ndi amene adzasankhidwe. Ngati pamawa, monga mwanenera, Ulu atadzasankha munthu wina kuti akhale wansembe, pakhomu paja pakhoza kudzabuka mapokoso. Bambo angawo sadzakhalapo ndipo mavuto onse adzagwera m’manja mwanga.”

“Zimene wanenazo ndi zoonadi ndipo sindikukumbira mlandu poyesetsa kukapa madzi akadali muakakolo.” Anaganizira nkhanayi kwa kanthawi ndipo kenako anawonjezera kuti: “Koma sindikuganiza kuti pangadzakhale mapokoso. Nwafu ndi Oduche ndi ana a bere limodzi. Ndimwayinso wokhawokha kuti iweyo ndi Obika simufuna mutakhala ansembe.”

“Komabe nanunso mumadziwa zimene Obika amachita nthawi zina,” anatero Edo. “Akhoza kungodzuka mawa n’kuyamba kunena kuti akufuna kukhala wansembe.”

Akuebue ndi mwana wa mnzakeyo anakambirana nkhanayi kwa nthawi yaitali.

Pamene Edo ankanyamuka (iye anatsanzika maulendo atatu kapena anayi kuti akupita koma osadzuka) Akuebue anamulonjeza kuti akayankhula ndi bambo akewo. Iye anamumvera chisoni kwambiri mnyamatayo. N’chifukwa chiyani ankalephera kutsegula pakamwa pake n’kunena zenizeni zimene ankafuna kunena? Bwanji amaleka kungomasuka n’kunena kuti akufuna kudzakhalala

Mkulu Wansembe m'malo momabisalira kumbuyo kwa Oduche ndi Obika? Akuebue anaona kuti chimenechi n'chifukwa chake Ezeulu sankamuwerengera kwenikweni pakati pa ana ake. Kunena zoonza kunali kuwerengera madzi amphutsi kumaganiza kuti kuchita zinthu mozizira kotere kungachititse kuti ula wa *afa* udzasankhe iyeyo kukhala wansembe. “Imfa ya munthu imayambira patali moti tsiku lomwalira limangolengeza zimene zinachitika kale m'mbuyomo,” iye anaganiza choncho. “Sipakuchita kufunika ula kuti tidziwe kuti iyeyo sangakhale Mkulu Wansembe. Nkhuku yodzakhala tambala imaoneka idakali mwanapiye.”

Komabe Akuebue anamumvera chisoni Edogo. Iye ankadziwa mmene mwana woyamba angamvere kukankhidwira kumbuyo kwa ana ena omwe anabadwa iye akuona. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake m'masiku oyambirira a Umuaro, Ulu anasankha kuti azingopereka mwana m'modzi yekha kwa Mkulu Wansembe kwa mibadwo isanu ndi iwiri.

Pamene ankapita kumadzi kuja, mkwatibwi watsopano uja, yemwe anali asanaonepo anthu atavala timalaya toyer pamoyo wake, anachita chidwi kwambiri ndi Oduche komanso chipembedzo chake chatsopanocho, chomwe chinkapereka zinthu zapamwambazi. Pofuna kumufowoketsa, Ojiugo anamunong'oneza kukhutu kuti anthu am'chipembedzo chatsopanocho amapha komanso kudya nsato. Mkwatibwiyo, monganso anthu ena onse a ku Umuaro, anamva zimene Oduche anachita ndi nsato yopatulika ija ndipo anafunsa kuti: “Kodi anaiphadi? Ifetu tinango uzidwa kuti anaiika m'chibokosi basi.” Mwatsoka, Okuata

sanali munthu woti n’kuyankhula monong’ona, ndipo zimene ananena zinagweranso m’makutu a Oduche. Nthawi yomweyo Oduche anathamangira kumene kunali Ojiugo ndipo, malinga ndi zimene Nwafo anafotokoza pambuyo pake, anamukupa mbama loonetsa nyenyezi. Zimenezo zinachititsa kuti Ojiugo asiye pansi mtsuko wake ndipo anapherera mbama linanso lomwe linkafuna kuteranso patsaya lake. Anachita zimenezi pogwiritsa ntchito nkono wake womwe unali ndi chibangiri chachitsulo moti Oduche anamenya chitsulocho.

Ululu umene Oduche anamva pamenepo unako-lezera mkwiyo wake moti anapwamwantha mchemwali wakeyo ndi mvula ya mambama oopsa kwambiri. Pampeto pake anapereka judo yomwe inafikira pamimba pa Ojiugo. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu omwe anabwera kuti awaleletse ayambe kumunena Oduche kuti ndi wankhalwe. Koma Ojiugo anangomukumbatira mchimwene wake wabere linayo kuti asapitirize kumumenya ndipo anamugwira mwamphamvu kwinaku akulira: “Ingondipha. Ingondimalizitsa, wamva iwe wokudya nsato? Ndati ingondipha.” Iye analuma munthu wina yemwe ankafuna kumukwangwanula m’thupi la m’bale wakeyo ndipo wina anamulemba ndi zala.

“Ingomusiyani,” anatero mayi wina monyansidwa. “Ngati akufuna kuphedwa musiyeni amuphe.”

“Musamayankhule choncho nanunso. Kodi munali musanabwere pamene Oduche amafuna kupha mchemwali wakeyo pomumenya pamimba ndi bondo?”

“Koma mmene wamumenyera mchimwene wakeyo tingati sanabwezere?” anafunsa wina wachitatu.

“Ayi sanabwezere,” anatero mayi wachiwiri uja. “Ndikuganiza kuti mnyamatayu ndi m’modzi mwa anthu omwe amasanduka anzeru akaona akazi.”

Gulu la oleletsawo linagawika pawiri. Ena anali kumbuyo kwa Ojiugo ndipo ena ankaona kuti Ojiugo wabwezera mokwanira kwa m'bale wakeyo. Gulu lomalizali linkauza Oduche kuti azipita kumadzi komanso kuti asamvetsere phuzo limene Ojiugo ankanena.

“Mwana wamphamba sangalephere kugwira nkhu-ku,” anatero Oyilidie, yemwe Ojiugo anamuluma. “Mtsikana uyuyu anatengera mayi ake kuvuta.”

“Nayenso uyu amanditengamo bwanji! Nanga iwe umafuna kuti atengere ndani, mayi ako?” Mawu amenewa anachokera kwa Ojinika, mayi wathupi lodzinga yemwe anali ndi chakukhosi ndi Oyilidie. Anthu ankanena kuti ngakhale Ojinika anali wooneka moopsa komanso ankakonda kutokosola anzake, mphamvu zake zinali zapakamwa basi moti kamwanamwana kakanatha kumugwetsera pansi ndi mpweya wotuluka mphuno mwake.

“Tatseka chimbudzi chakocho iwe! Usatsegulenso pakamwa pako poloshokapo, wamva-a?” anatero Oyilidie. “Apo ayi ndipungula mano ali mkamwa mwakowo. Kape-natu mwina wangoiwala . . .”

“Chitsiru iwe,” anatero Ojinika. Anthu awiriwa anali atayamba kuyandikana mokhala ngati akufuna kumenyana, ataima ndi zala, zifuwa zitatugumukira kutsogolo.

“Kodi anthuwa ayambana chiyani?” anafunsa mayi wina. “Tandipisani ndidutse ine. Kukhuta eti!”

Ojiugo anali akusisimabe pamene ankakafika kunyumba. Nwafo ndi Oduche anali atafika kale, koma mayi a Ojiugo sankafuna kuwafunsa kuti ena ali kuti. Atango muona Ojiugo, mayi akewo ankafuna kuyamba kumutsira mphepo. Ankafuna kumufunsa ngati amadikirira kuti maddzi abwere kumtsinjeko kapena ngati anagona tulo tofa nato n'kudzidzimuka dzuwa litakwera. Koma mawuwa sanatuluke ataona mwana wakeyo akulira.

“Chachitika n’chiyani?” Ojiugo anawonjezera kusi-sima kwinaku akufwenthera. Mayi akewo anamutula mtsuko womwe anasenza uja ndipo anamufunsanso kuti chachitika n’chiyani. Asananene chilichonse, Ojiugo anakalowa m’khumbi lawo ndipo anakakhala pansi n’kupu-kuta misozi yake. Kenako anayala nkhani yonse. Matefi ankayang’anitsitsa nkhope ya mwana wakeyo ndipo ana-ona zala zomwe Oduche analemba ndi dzanja lake pamene ankamukupa mbama lija. Pamenepo mwana wamayi anatutuma n’kuyamba kuphulusika ndi mkwiyo. Analalata koopsa moti anthu ena onse a nyumba zoyandikira anamva.

Ezeulu anapita kuseriko akuyenda mwapang’ono-pang’ono ngati kalilombe ndipo anafunsa kuti phokosolo ndi la chiyani.

Matefi ankalamulatabe mokweza kwambiri.

“Ukutisokosa iwe takhala chete,” Ezeulu analamula.

“Mukundiuza kuti ndikhale chete,” anayankhula mokuwa Matefi, “Oduche akutengera mwana wanga kumtsinje n’kukamumenya mpaka kumupha. Nditseka bwanji pakamwa panga anthu akubweretsa mtembo wa mwana wanga kwa ine. Pitani mukaone nkhope yake; mukaone zala zimene mwana wanuyo walemba patsaya pake . . .” Mawu ake anali atakwera kwambiri moti anafika pomamveka ngati ng’oma ya mpanje.

“Ndanena kuti ukhale chete! Kodi wazungulira mutu?”

Matefi anasiya kukuwa kuja. Kenako anayamba kuyankhula mong’ung’udza: “Ndakhala chete. Ineyo ndisakhale chete chifukwa chiyani? Pajansotu Oduche ndi mwana wa Ugoye. Inde Matefi akuyeneradi kukhala chete.”

“Ndisamvenso wina akutchula dzina langa kumene-
neko!” anakuwa motero Ugoye pamene ankatuluka
m’khumbi mwake momwe anatambalala ngati kuti pho-
koso lomwe linkachitika panyumbapo linkachitika m’fuko
lina lakutali. “Ndanena kuti wina asayerekeze kutchulanso
dzina langa kumeneke,” anatero akudzuka kuti atuluke
panja.

“Nawenso, takhala chete,” anatero Ezeulu akumu-
tembenukira, “Palibe amene watchula dzina lako pano.”

“Kodi simunamve Matefi akutchula dzina langa?”

“Ndiye ngati walitchula? . . . Pita ukamuponde
pamimba ngati ukufuna.”

Ugoye anangonyansitsa nkhope n’kubwereranso
kukhumbi muja.

“Oduche!”

“Wawa!”

“Tabwera kuno!”

Oduche anatuluka m’khumbi mwa mayi ake muja.

“Kodi phokosoli layamba bwanji?” anafunsa Ezeulu.

“Mufunseni Ojiugo ndi mayi akewo akuuzeni.”

“Ine ndakufunsa iweyo, ndiye usandiuzenso kuti
ndifunse munthu wina, apo ayi galu anyambita maso
akowo m’mawa uno. Kodi anthu inu munakhala bwanji?
Mwaphunzira kuti mwano umenewu n’kufika pomabweza
mawu ndikamakuyankhulani?” Iye anayang’ana onse
omwe anali pamalowo, ndipo kenako anasintha n’kuya-
mba kuoneka ngati mkango. “Wina akangoyerekezanso
kutsegula pakamwa pake n’kumayankhana ndi ine adziwa
chifukwa chake munthu amatseka pakamwa pake chi-
nyawu chikamayankhula.” Kenako anayang’ananso onse
omwe anali pamalowo akuonetsetsa ngati wina angaye-
rekeze kutsegula pakamwa pake n’kumuyankha kuti amu-
onetse chinameta nyani mduliro. Palibe amene anaye-

rekeza dala kuyankhula ndipo Ezeulu anatembenuka n'kukalowa mu *obi* wake, mkwiyo woopsa utamuchititsa misala n'kufika posafunanso kumva chimene chinayambitsa mapokosowo.

Kufulumira kwa Akuebue pokamba nkhani ya Oduche kunaoneka ngati kosathandiza. Iye ankafuna kumaliza nkhanii anthu ena asanayambe kufika pakhomopa ndipo zinali zosachita kufunsa kuti patsikuli kufikadi anthu ambiri ndipo adzaziratu pamakomo onse atatu a Ezeulu ndi ana ake. Anthu ambiri omwe anabwera dzulo lake anali oti abweranso lero. Enanso osawerengeka anali oti abwera koyamba chifukwa inali nthawi ya njala yomwe nkhokwe zambiri zimakhala zopanda kanthu ndipo anthuwa sakanalephera kupezeka kunyumba ya munthu wolembera kuti akapatsidwe choti aponye m'mimba kapena nyanga imodzi ya uchema kuti akonkheko kukhosi. Akuebue ankadziwiratu kuti munthu woyambirira akangofika zikhala zosatheka kuyankhulanso ndi Ezeulu, choncho sanachite zinthu mozungulira kapena motaya nthawi. Koma akandziwa kuti nkhanii umuwawa kwambiri Ezeulu, mwina akanangoisunga n'kudzakambirana naye tsiku lina.

Ezeulu ankangomumvetsera mwakachetechete, atakunga zibakera zake ngati wagwira ndi manja ake kukhumudwa komanso mkwiyo wonse womwe anali nawo.

“Wamaliza kuyankhula?” Ezeulu anafunsa Akuebue atapumulira kuyankhula.

“Inde, ndamaliza.”

“Ulemu wanga upite kwa iweyo.” Ezeulu sankayang'ana mnzakeyo koma ankayang'ana chakukhomo la *obi* wakeyo. “Sindinganene kuti walakwitsa kundiuza

zimenezi. Sikuti wanena chilichonse chimene munthu angaimbidwe nacho mlandu pochiyanikhula kwa bwenzi lake. Ineyo si wakhungu komanso si ine wogontha. Ndikudziwa kuti anthu a mu Umuaro agawanika komanso kuti asokonezeka. Ndikudziwanso kuti anthu ena akumapanga misonkhano yachinsinsi n’kumanena kuti ineyo ndi amene ndikuyambitsa mavuto. Koma nkhani imeneyi ndi yaing’ono kwa ine moti singandilepheretse nayo kupha mkonono. Zinthu zimenezi si zachilendo ndipo zipita ngati mmenenso nkhani zina zimapitira. Mvula ya chizimalupsa ikangogwa pakhala patadutsa zaka zisanu kuchokera pamene munthu yemweyu anaitanitsa msonkhano wachinsinsi kunyumba kwake n’kumanena kuti Ulu walephera kuwathandiza pankhondo yachipseramtima yomwe ankakamira kukamenya ija ndipo ankanena kuti kuli bwino angomuchotsa mulunguyu. Mpaka pano tikudikirabe, ineyo limodzi ndi Ulu, kuti abwere n’kudzatichotsa pampando. Chimene chikundizula moyo si chitsiru chopanda nzeru chimene chikumayendayenda n’kumatumbwa chifukwa cha chuma chimene chinabwera pakhomo pake mwangozi. Chikundiwawa kwambiri n’choti wansembe wamantha wa Idemili akumabisalira kuseri kwa chitsiru chachumachi n’kumachilimbikitsa kuti chizibwera poyera n’kumachita mwano.

“Ali ndi kaduka kachinangwa,” anatero Akuebue.

“Ndikudziwa kuti akanakhala kuti amadziwa njira yopita kudziko lamizimu la Ani-Mmo, akanapita konko n’kumakalimbana ndi mizimu ya makolo athu kuti n’chifukwa chiyani anapereka unsembe wa Ulu ku Umuachala osati kumudzi wawo. Koma anthu amenewa sindikuda nawo nkhawa. Chomwe chikundidetsa nkhwawa ndi zimene anthu a fuko lathu akumanena. Ndiye iwe ukubwerakuno n’kumandifunsa kuti, kodi ndi ndani amene akumauza

anthu a fuko lathuli zimenezi? E-e, kodi akumawauza zotani? . . . Nthawi zinatunawenso Akuebue umandiseketsa kwambiri. Iweyo unali komwe kuno—kapenatu unali usanabadwe—pamene fuko lathu linasankha kupita kukamenyana ndi anthu a ku Okperi chifukwa cha kachidutswa ka malo olima komwe sikanalinso kathu. Kodi sindinaime pamaso pa fuko lathu n’kuwauza zimene zitawachitikire ngati atakakamira maganizo awowo? Ndiye ndi mawu a ndani amene anakhala olondola pamapeto pake? Kodi zimene ndinanena sizinachitike?”

Akuebue sanayankhe funsoli.

“Zonse zimene ndinanena zinachitika ndendende, ndikunama kapena?”

“Zimene wanenazo ndi zoona,” anatero Akuebue ndipo kenako mokhala ngati akuchita zinthu mopupulumirako komanso mosasamala anawonjezera kuti, “koma umaiwala chinthu chimodzi bwanawe. Chinthu chake ndi choti palibe munthu aliyense, ngakhale atakhala wanzeru chotani, amene angalimbane ndi fuko lake. Ukhoza kuganiza kuti unachita bwino ponena zimenezo pa nkhani ya malo ija, koma ndikufuna kukuuza kuti unalakwitsa. Anthu ku Umuaro sadzasiya kunena kuti unawatembenukira n’kuwapereka m’manja mwa mzungu. Ndipo akumanenanso kuti ukuwaperekanso lero potumiza mwana wako kwa mzungu yemwe akusokoneza dziko lathuli.”

Zimene Ezeulu anayankha zinathandiza Akuebue kudziwa kuti ngakhale kuti wansembeyu anali mnzake wapamtima, anali asanamudziwebe. Ngakhale ana ake sankamudziwa. Akuebue sankadziwa kuti amuyankha zotani, koma anadzidzimuka kumuona akuseka mwachikhakhade. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti Akuebe achite mantha komanso ayambe kumangika monga amachitira munthu amene wakumana ndi munthu wamisala n’kumuona aku-

seka maonekedwe a njira yomwe sidutsidwa kawirikawiri. Iye sanakhale ndi nthawi yokwanira yomuthandiza kudziwa mmene mnzakeyo ankamvera. Koma mwayi umenewu akanadzakhala nawonso m'tsogolo, akanadzachita zinthu mosamala. Mwina pamenepo m'pamene akanadzamvetsa bwinobwino zimene mnzakeyo ankaganiza.

“Usandiseketse Akuebue,” anatero Ezeulu kachiwirinso. “Kodi kani ndinapereka mtundu wa Umuaro kwa mzungu? Ndikufunse funso limodzi: Kodi ndi ndani amene anabweretsa mzunguyu kuno? Kodi ndi Ezeulu? Tina-pita kukamenyana ndi anthu a ku Okperi omwe ndi abale athu, magari athu ndi ofanana. Tinakamenyana nawo chifukwa cha kachidutswa ka malo olima komwenso sikathu. Ndiye kodi inu mwayambanso kuimba mlandu mzunguyo chifukwa anakuleletsani. Kodi simunamvepo kuti anthu apachibale akamaphana mlendo ndi amene amatenga chuma chawo? Kodi ndi azungu angati omwe anapita kukatsitsitiza Abame? Ukudziwa kuti analipo angati? Anali-potu asanu okha, asanu basi.” Pamene ankanena zimenezi anali atakweza dzanja lake ndipo anatambasula zala zake zisanu ngati mwafuli. “Ndiye kodi unayamba wamvapo kuti anthu asanu okha—ngakhale atakhala kuti mitu yawo imagunda kumwamba chifukwa cha kukula kwa matupi awo—angakwanitse kutsitsitiza fuko lonse lathunthu mpaka chipere? Sizingatheke zimenezo! Ngakhale akanakhala kuti akugwiritsa ntchito mphamvu zawo zonse komanso matsenga awo onse, azunguwa sakanakwanitsa okha kuwononga Olu komanso Igbo yense ifeyo tikanakhala kuti sitinamuthandize. Kodi ndi ndani amene anawalozera njira yopita ku Abame? Azunguwotu sanabawire kuno, ndiye anadziwa bwanji njira yomwe inakawafikitsa ku Abame? Tinawalozera njira ndi ife tomwe ndipo mpaka pano tikuwasonyezabe njira yoti akaphere

abale athu. Ndiye munthu wina asayerekeze kubwera kwa ine n’kumadzadandaula kuti mzungu anachita izi komanso izo. Munthu amene wabweretsa mbozi m’nyumba mwake sayenera kumadandaula abuluzi akayamba kubwera kudzacheza kunyumba kwake.”

“Sindingatsutse zinthu zonse zimene wanenazo. Tinachitadi zinthu zambiri zolakwika kalelo. Koma sindikuona kuti pali chifukwa choti tipitirize kuchita zimenezi. Tsopano tadziwa zimene tinapotoza, ndipo tikufunika kuwongola zinthu. Akuluakulu ananena kuti munthu amene sadziwa pamene mvula yayambira kumuchapa, sanga-kumbukirenso pamene inasiyira kugwa. Ifeyo sitili ngati munthu ameneyu. Tikudziwa pamene mvulayi inayambira kutitsukuluza . . .”

“Koma ine sindikuona choncho,” anatero Ezeulu. “Kaya mukudziwa kapena ayi, musaiwale chinthu chimodzi. Ifeyo tamulozera mzungu njira ya kunyumba kwathu ndiponso tamupatsa mpando woti akhalire. Ngati tikufuna kuti achoke pakhomo pathu, tiyenera kudikira mpaka atatopa n’kubwerera kumene anachokera. Apo ayi tichite kumupirikitsa. Koma kodi mukuganiza kuti mungamupirikitse poimba mlandu Ezeulu? Mukhoza kuyesera, ndipo tsiku limene angadzachokedi ndidzabwera n’kukugwirani chanza. Ineyo ndili ndi njira yanga yomwe ndikugwiritsa ntchito ndipo sindilola kuti wina andichulukire nzeru. Ine ndimatha kuona zinthu zomwe ena sakuona. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake anthu amandidziwa komanso pa nthawi imodzimodzi yomweyo amalephera kundidziwa bwinobwino. Iweyo ndi bwenzi langa ndipo umadziwa ngati ndili wachifwamba, wopha anthu kapena munthu woona mtima. Koma sungakwanitse kudziwa chinthu chimene chimaimba ng’oma imene Ezeulu amavina. Maso anga amaona patali kwambiri, ndimatha

kuona pamawa. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake ndimatha kuuza Umuaro kuti: Chokani kumeneko kuli imfa, kapena chitani izi zikuyenderani bwino. Ngati atasankha kundi-mvera, zili bwino; koma ngati atasankha kusandimvera, azionera okha. Ine ndinadutsa msinkhu womavina kuti anthu andifupe. Iwe ukuwadziwa bwinobwino bambo anga omwe anali wansembe ine ndisanakhale. Ukuwadziwanso agogo anga, ngakhale kuti unawaona uli kamwana.”

Akuebue anagwedezera mutu posonyeza kuvomereza.

“Kodi agogo anga si amene anaika mwala pa *ichi* ku Umuaro? Iye anaimirira mwamphamvu n’kunena kuti: *Tiyenera kusiya kugoba nkhope zathu chifukwa nkhopezo si zitseko za ozo.*”

“Indedi ananena zimenezo,” anatero Akuebue.

“Kodi anthu a ku Umuaro anawayankha chiyani? Ukudziwa zimene anawayankha? Anayamba kuwatemberrera. Ankanena kuti amuna awo azioneka ngati akazi. Anati: *Kodi amuna asonyeza bwanji kulimba mtima kwawo ngati samenya nkondo? Nanga lero alipo amene angafunsenso funso limeneli?*”

Akuebue anaona kuti wavomereza kale kokwanira moti ulendo uno sanayankhenso.

“Palibe amene angakayikire zimene wanenazo,” anatero Akuebue, “koma ngati zimene tinauzidwa zili zoonza, agogo ako sanali okha pankhondoyo. Zimamveka kuti panali anthu ambiri omwe ankatsutsa *ichi* ku Umuaro kuposa . . .”

“Kodi bambo ako anakufotokozera motero nkhani imeneyi? Ine ndinaimva mosiyanako. Chabwino izo zikhale choncho, koma chofunika n’choti Mkulu Wansembe ankawatsogolera ndipo iwo anatsatira. Koma ngati nkhani

imeneyi inawonjezedwa ndi malovu, nanga bwanji zinthu zimene zinachitika m'nthawi ya bambo anga? Iweyo sunali mwana pamene bambo anga anathetsa mwambo wonena kuti mwana aliyense amene wabadwa kwa mkazi wamasiye azikhala kapolo pokhapokha . . .”

“Inetu si munthu woti ndingamatsutse zimene iweyo ukunena, Ezeulu. Ineyo ndi mnzako ndipo ndikhoza kuyankhula nawe mmene ndikufunira. Koma zimenezo sizikutanthauza kuti ndaiwala zoti mbali imodzi ya thupi lako ndi munthu, pomwe mbali ina ndi mzimu. Ndipo zimene wanena zokhudza bambo ako komanso agogo ako ndi zoonza zokhazokha. Koma zimene zinkachitika munthawi yawo ndi zimene zikuchitika panopa n'zosiyana. Ndipo sizikufanana ngakhale pang'ono. Bambo ako komanso agogo ako sanachite zimenezo kuti asangalatse mlendo . . .”

Zimenezi zinamuwawa kwambiri Ezeulu, koma ulendo unonso anaugwira mkwiyo wake.

“Usandiseketse Akuebue,” anatero Ezeulu. “Ngati munthu atabwera kwa iweyo n'kumakuuza kuti Ezeulu anatumiza mwana wake kuchipembedzo chachilendo n'cholinga choti asangalatse munthu wina, ungamukhulupirire? Nanga ungamuuze zotani? Ndanena kale kuti usandiseketse-e! Kodi ukufuna ndikuuze chifukwa chake ndinatumiza mwana wanga kuchipembedzo chimene chija? Tandimvetsera tsopano: Matenda amene anthu sana-waonepo sangachizidwe ndi mankhwala omwe anthu anawazolowera. Tikamapanga chithumwa, timayang'ana nyama imene magari ake amafanana ndi mphamvu za chithumwa chomwe tikufuna kupangacho. Ngati magari a nkuku sangagwire, timayesa a mbuzi kapena nkhoa. Ngati sakukwanabe timakatenga a ng'ombe. Koma nthawi zina magari a ng'ombe samakhala okwanira. Zikatero

timafunika kugwiritsa ntchito a munthu. Kodi ukuganiza kuti timafika pamenepa chifukwa chongofuna kumva munthu akulira akamaphedwa basi? Ayi bwanawe. Timachita zimenezi chifukwa taya zonse koma zakanika, ndipo tikusowa mtengo wogwira. Timakhala tikudziwa kuti magari a nkuku, a mbuzi kapena a ng'ombe sangathandize. Ndi potu makolo athu ananena kuti zidzachitika ndi m'badwo wina kutsogoloku kuti udzakumana ndi mavuto oopsa moti misana yawo idzathyoledwa n'kupachikidwa pambali pa moto ngati kanyenya. Zimenezi zikadzachitika adzafunika kupereka nsembe magari awo omwe. Chimenechi n'chimene akuluakulu anthu ankatanthauza pamene ananena kuti munthu amene akusowa poika manja ake amagwira mabondo ake. Chimenecho n'chifukwa chake makolo anthu atapanikizidwa koopsa ndi asilikali a ku Abam anafika mpaka popereka nsembe m'modzi wa iwo, osati mlendo, koma m'bale wawo weniweni. Pogwiritsa ntchito nsembe imeneyo anapanga mankhwala amphamvu kwambiri omwe anawatchula kuti Ulu."

Akuebue anagwira zala zake n'kuzithetsetsa ngati akuthyola matsatsa ndipo kenako anayamba kugwedeza mutu wake. "Kani ndi nsembe," iye anayankhula chapansipansi kwa iye mwini. "Ndiye kuti zimene Edogo amanena zija ndi zooni eti? Inetu ndimangomuona ngati wopepera pamene amandifotokozera paja." Kenako anakhala kaye duu. Pambuyo pake ananena mokweza kuti: "Ndiye ukuganiza kuti zidzakhala bwanji mwana wamupereka nsembeyu akadzasankhidwa ndi Ulu kuti akhale wansembe iweyo ukadzabzala chinangwa?"

"Zimenezo musiyireni mulungu yemweyo. Nthawi imene ukunenayo ikadzafika, Ulu sadzafuna thandizo lako kapena langa. Ndiye usamalephere kugona tulo chifukwa cha nkhani imeneyi."

“Sindingachite zimenezo, ndisowerenji tulo ndi zimenezi? Pakhomo panga naponso pali mavuto tho-omwe akudikira ine kuti ndiwasamalire. Sindingapezenso nthawi yoti ndizidera nkhwaza za pakhomo pako. Ukuganiza kuti malo angapezeke kuti oti ndiike mavuto a pakhomo pakowa? Koma ndibwerezenso zimene ndinakuza zija. Ngati sukufuna kumvetsera ukhoza kutseka makutu akowo kuti usamve. Pamene unkayankhula zotsutsana ndi nkondo yomenyana ndi anthu a ku Okperi paja sunali wekha. Inenso sindinkagwirizana nazo, ndiponso anthu ena ambiri. Koma ngati watumiza mwana wako kuti akakhale mbali ya alendowa n’kumanyozetsa nthaka ya Umuaro, pamenepo ndiye ukhaladi wekha. Ukhoza kupita kukalemba ndi choko pakhoma apo kuti uzikumbukira zimene ndanenazi.”

“Kodi ndi ndani amene anganene ngati nthaka ya Umuaro yanyozeka, iweyo kapena ine?” Kamwa la Ezeulu linasongoka ndi kayang’anidwe kodzikuzi. “Ukanena zoti ndidzakhala ndekha, zimenezo si zodetsa nkhwaza. Pajatu kufa saferana. Sindikuona kuti ndingadzamve ululu ngati nditadzakhala ndekha pa nthawiyo. Mwina ndibwerezenso kuti usandisekeze-e!”

Nwafo yemwe analowa m’khumbimo pamene Akuebue ankanena kuti thupi la Ezeulu ndi mbali imodzi munthu, mbali ina mzimu, sankamvetsa kuti anthu awiriwa amakangana chiyani. Koma anali atawaonaponso akukangana chonchi maulendo angapo m’mbuyomo. Choncho sanadabwe pamene bambo ake ankamuuza kuti akatenge mafuta a gwalagwa osakaniza ndi tsabola kuchokera kwa mayi ake. Pamene ankabwera anapeza Ezeulu atatsitsa kale kadengu kake. Kadenguko kanali ndi chivindikiro chotsekedwa bwino ndipo anakamangirira kude nga moti kankalendewera pamwamba pa moto womwe

unkayaka m'khumbimo. Pambali pa kadenguko pankalendeweranso nkhwende ziwiri zopangidwa ndi mlaza, zikho ziwiri komanso chimanga chingapo cha chaka chantha chomwe chinachita kusankhidwa mwapadera chifu kwa cha kukongola kwake kuti azachibzale. Kadenguko, chimangacho komanso nkhwende zija zinali zitaderatu ndi mwaye.

Ezeulu anatsegula kadengu kaja ndipo anatulusamo mwendo wowambawamba wa mbuzi ndipo anadula chidutsa chachikulu n'kuchipereka kwa Akuebue. Kenako anadula chidutswa china chaching'ono kuti nayenso achotse dalazi.

“Kodi mungandigayire chinachake choti ndikulungemo chiwambachi,” anatero Akuebue. Ezeulu anatuma Nwafo kuti akadule tsamba lanthochi ndipo posakhalitsa anatulukira ndipo bambo akewo analandira n'kuliwamba pamoto uja mpaka litanyala pang'ono. Kenako analipereka kwa Akuebue yemwe anadula nyama ija zigawo ziwiri, n'kukulunga mbali yaikulu ndi tsamba la nthochi lija, ndipo kenako Anaika m'chikwama chake. Aterero anaviika chidutswa chotsalacho m'mafuta otsira tsabola aja n'kuyamba kudya.

Ezeulu ananyotsola kaulusi kakang'ono ka nyama kuchokera ku nyama yake ija n'kumupatsa Nwafo ndipo nyama yotsalayo anaigalika yonse. Kwa nthawi yaitali ankangotafuna mwakachete ndipo pamene ankayambiranso kuyankhula anayamba kucheza nkhani zina zosafunika kwenikweni. Kenako Ezeulu anathyola kamtengo kuchokera kutsache lomwe linali chapafupi ndipo anatsamira khoma n'kuyamba kutokosa m'mano. Atakhalachoncho, Ezeulu ankatha kuona komanso kuyankha alendo omwe ankabwera pakhomo pakepo ndiponso kumakomo a ana ake awiri aja. Choncho ndi iyeyo amene

anayambirira kuona mesenjala yemwe ankabwera pakho-mopa limodzi ndi womuperekeza.

Pamene mesenjalayo ankafika pakhomo la nyumba ya Ezeulu, womuperekeza uja anawomba m'manja n'ku-nena kuti: "Kodi kuli anthu kuno?" Ezeulu anakhala kaye chete asanayankhe: "Lowa uwaona!" Woperekezayo ana-lowwa chowerama ndipo kenako mesenjala uja nayenso analowa. Ezeulu anawalonjera ndipo anawauza kuti akha-le pansi. Mesenjalayo anakhala pakama wozira, koma woperekeza uja anangoima. Atamaliza kulonjeranako, woperekezayo ananena kuti iyeyo ndi mwana wa Nwodika wa ku Umunneora.

"Nditangokuona ukubwera panjapo ndimaganiza ngati ndikuona malemu bambo ako," anatero Akuebue.

"Zoonadi," anatero Ezeulu. "Aliyense amene wao-na iweyo amaganiza kuti waona Nwodika. Komatu mnza-koyu akuoneka kuti watheka ndi ulendo!"

"Inde, taubabada wapansi kuchokera ku Okperi. . ."

"Kodi nawenso ukukhala ku Okperi?" anafunsa Ezeulu.

"Inde," anayankha Akuebue. "Kodi sunamve kuti m'modzi mwa anyamata athu akukhala ndi mzungu ku Okperi?"

Ezeulu anali atamvapo za nkhaniyi koma anana-mizira kuti sanamvepo.

"Zoonadi?" anafunsa. "Masiku ano nkhani zambiri zi-kumandidutsa. Koma ndiye munalawiratu, pali kamtunda-tu kuti ukafike ku Okperi. Ife ndiye tinatha moti kuyenda kumativuta. Timasilira anyamata amagazi ngati inu, omwe mumatha kuyenda mtunda wautali thupi osakuphwanyani. Anthu a kwawo kwa mayi anga ali bwanji? Kodi uma-dziwa kuti mayi anga anachokera ku Okperi?"

"Pamene timachoka anthu amasangalala komanso

kuseka. Koma tikanena za zimene zachitika titachoka ndiye ndisaname, sindikudziwa.”

“Ndiye amene wabwera nayeyu ndi ndani?”

“Ndi mesenjala wa mzungu wamphamvu uja, uja amatchedwa Wowononga Mifuti.”

Ezeulu anathethetsa zala zake ndipo kenako anagwedezera mutu. “Ndi mesenjala wa Wintabota eti! Nanga iyeyu kwawo ndi kuti, ku Okperi komweko?”

“Ayi,” anatero woperekeza uja. “Ndi wa fuko la Umuru.”

“Wintabota munamusiya ali bwanji pamene muma-choka? Patengatu nthawi tisanamuone m’chigawo cha kunochi.”

“Musadandaule, munthu waima apayu ndiye diso lake.” Mesenjala uja ankaoneka kuti sakutekeseka ndi zimene ankakambiranazo. Mumtima mwake anali atakwiya kwambiri ndi munthu wakuthengoyu, yemwe ankafuna kumadzionetsa ngati amadziwana ndi DC.

Woperekeza uja anazindikira zimenezi ndipo anachita dala potchula kufunika kwa mesenjalayo.

“Mlendo wathu, takulandira,” anatero Ezeulu. “Dzina lako ndi ndani?”

“Dzina lake ndi Jekopu,” anatero woperekeza uja. “Monga ndanenera palibe amene amaonana ndi Wowononga Mifupi popanda chilolezo chake. Ku Okperi konse palibe amene sadziwa Jekopu.”

“Wowononga Mifuti anandiuza kuti nditsagane ndi mesenjalayu paulendowu chifukwa iyeyu sakukudziwa kuno.”

“Inde,” anatero Ezeulu akumuyang’ana Akuebe ndi diso lachiweruzo. “Ndi mmene ziyenera kukhalira. Mzungu watumiza munthu wochokera ku Umuru ndipo munthu wa ku Umuru waperekezedwa ndi munthu wa ku

Umuaro.” Kenako anaseka. “Ndinakuuza chiyani Akuebue? Makolo anthu sananame pamene ankanena kuti ngakhale mizimu yochuluka itachita chiwembu kuti iphe munthu, sizinatheke pokhapokha *chi* wake atagwirizana nazo.”

Anthu awiriwo anadabwa ndi zimenezi. Kenako mwana wa Nwodika ananena kuti: “Zimenezo zili apo, ife tinene chimene tabwerera. Ulendo wathuwu sitinabwere ndi uthenga wa imfa.”

“Inde, tikudziwa zimenezo. Yangokhala njira yokometsera poyankhula. Pajatu ife pachikhalidwe chathu timatenderera nkhani ndi nsinjiro zachiyankhulo. Basi, tizisamalano ndi chichewa chimene tizikuponyerani kuti tisakusiyeni m’mbuyo. Ndikudziwa kuti Wintabota sangatumize uthenga wa imfa kwa Ezeulu. Inu ndi mabwenzi athu. Chimene ndimanena ndi choti mlendo sangabwere ku Umuaro kupatulapo ngati mwana wam’mudzi mom’muno atamulozera njira.

“Zimenezo ndi zoonaz,” anatero woperekeza uja. “Tabwera . . .”

“Bwanawe,” anamudula mawu mesenjala uja, “iweyo wachita zomwe unauzidwa kuti uchite. Ntchito yako inali kungondilondolera njira basi. Zina zonse zisiye m’manja mwanga. Ngati lirime lako likulumphalumphamkamwa mwakomo, ingolimanga n’kulilongedza m’chimize.”

“Pepani kwambiri mundikhululukire! Munthu salakwira mtengo. Pitirizani kuyankhula achimwene.”

Ezeulu anatuma Nwafo kuti akatenge kola kwa Matefi.

Pa nthawiyi, Obika ndi Edogo anali atafika pakho-mo ndipo mphepo ya nkhani yakuti kukhumbi kwa bambo awo kwabwera mesenjala wa mzungu inawapeza. Kola uja

atabwera anayendetsedwa kuti onse amuone ndipo kenako anaswedwa.

“Kodi anthu omwe unawatuma kuti akagule uchema kumsika aja abwera?” anafunsa Ezeulu koma Obika ananena kuti sanabwere.

“Ndinadziwa kuti sakaupenza. Munthu amene akufuna kukagula uchema samazipindidza m’mabulangete mpaka dzuwa kutuluka. Kuteroko amaganiza kuti uchemawo uzidikirira iwowo kumsikako?” Ezeulu ananena zimenezi atatsamirabe khoma, mwendo umodzi ataupinda n’kumasisita bondo lake.

Kenako mesenjala uja anachotsa chisoti chake chabuluu kumutu kwake ndipo anachisomeka pabondo lake. Mutu wake unali wometedwa mbonga moti unkawala ngati chiboliboli chifukwa cha thukuta. Chipewacho chinalemberera mzere kuzungulira mutu wake. Kenako anatukuluza kukhosi n’kuyamba kuyankhula.

“Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.” Iye anatulutsa kabuku kakang’ono kwambiri kuchokera m’tumba la pachifuwa pake ndipo anakatsegula mofanana ndi mmene azungu ankachitira. “Kodi pakati panupa Ezeulu ndi ndani?” Iye anafunsa akuyang’ana m’kabuku kaja ndipo kenako anadzutsa mutu wake n’kuyamba kuyang’ana anthu amene anali m’khumbimo, koma palibe amene Anayantha. Onse m’khumbimo anangoti kukamwa yasa-a. Ndi Akuebue amene maganizo ake anabwerera mwachangu.

“Yang’ananso kachiwiri ndipo kenako uwerenge mano ako pogwiritsa ntchito lirime lakolo,” anatero Obika.

“Khala pansi Obika, usamadabwe nazo ukaona mlendo akuyankhulira m’mphuno,” anatero Akuebue.

“Kodi wanena kuti ndiwe wochokera ku Umuru?” anafunsa Ezeulu. “Kodi kwanuko kuli ansembe komanso

madoda olemkezekela?”

“Musasokonezeke ndi funso langali. Mzungu ali ndi njira zakezake zomwe amachitira zinthu. Asanachite chilichonse amayamba wafunsa kaye dzina ndipo amafuna kuti yakho lake lichokere pakamwa pa mwini wakeyo.”

“Ngati mutu wakowo ukugwira,” anatero Obika, “uyenera kudziwa kuti munomo si m’nyumba ya mzungu ndiponso kuti uli ku Umuaro m’nyumba ya Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu.”

“Khala chete, Obika. Wamva posachedwapa Akuebue akunena kuti alendo amayankhulira m’mphuno. Kodi ukudziwa ngati kwawo ali ndi Mkulu Wansembe kapena ngati kudzikola azunguko amakhala naye?”

“Mumuuze mnyamata uyo kuti asamale ndi pakamwa pake. Ngati sanamvepo za ine akafunse amene amandidziwa bwino.”

“Choka finye iwe!”

“Ndati ukhale chete Obika!” anakuwa Ezeulu. “Munthu uyu wachokera komwe kumudzi wa mayi anga ndipo sindingalole kuti wina amuchite chipongwe ine ndikuona. Komansotu iyeyu wangokhala mesenjala. Ngati sitikugwirizana ndi uthenga wake sitienera kulimbana naye. Tiyenera kulimbana ndi amene wamutumayo.”

“Zoonadi zimenezo,” anatero Akuebue.

“Unandifunsa funso,” anapitiriza Ezeulu akutembenukiranso kwa mesenjala uja. “Tsopano ndikufuna ndikuyankhe funso lako. Ezeulu ndi ineyo. Mtima wako waphwano eti?”

“Zikomo kwambiri. Tonsefe ndi amuna pano, koma tikatsegula pakamwa pathu m’pamene timasiyanitsa anthu okhwima m’mutu ndi ana. Tayankhula kale zambiri—zina zinali zaphindu, zina zopanda mchere. Zina zinali zinthu zatanthauzo, pomwe zina zinali zoduka mutu. Tsopano

ndinene chimene ndabwerera, paja amati mbululu simathawa masanasana popanda chinthu chimene chikuika moyo wake pachiopsezo. Sikuti ndabwera kuno kuchokera ku Okperi kuti ndidzangowongola miyendo. M'bale wanuyu wakuuzani kale mmene Kaputini Winta-bor-tom anandipatsira udindo woyang'anira zinthu zake zonse. Iye uja ndi wolemekezeka kwambiri, ndi mfumu ya azungu onse m'chigawo chino. Ndinadziwana naye zaka khumi zapitazo koma sindinaonepo mzungu wina yemwe ngakhale azungu amanjenjemera akaima pamaso pake. Pamene amanditumiza kuno sanandiuze kuti ali ndi bwenzi lake ku Umuaro." Kenako anaseka mwamwano. "Koma ngati zimene mukunenazo ndi zoona, tikaona mukakafika ku Okperi. Wandituma kuti ndidzakutengeni kuti mukakumane naye."

"Kodi ukutanthauza chiyani?" anafunsa Akuebue modabwa.

Mesenjala uja anapitirizabe kuseka motsitsa mawu. "Inde," iye anatero mwamatama. "Bwenzi lanu Wintabota" (nayenso ulendo uno anatchula dzinali mwachimidzimidzi monga mmene enawo ankamutchulira) "walamula kuti mukaonekere pamaso pake mawa mawa."

"Kuti?" anafunsa Edogo.

"Angakakumane nayenso kuti kuposa kuofesi yake ku Okperi."

"Munthuyu ndi wozungulira mutu," anatero Obika.

"Ayi, bwanawe. Ngati panopa pali wozungulira mutu ndiye ndi iweyo. Nkhani ndi yakuti Ezeulu ayenera kuyambapo kukonzekera ulendowu. Mwamwayi nsewu watsopano waphweketsa mayendedwe kwabasi moti ukuchititsa ngakhale anthu opuwala kuti azilakalaka atayenda. Mawa m'mawa tigwira tambala kukamwa. Tambala woyamba akangolira tiuyamba kuti kukamacha tikakhale

titaſika.”

“Ndanena kale kuti munthuyu ndi wopenga. Ndi ndani . . .”

“Ayi si wopenga,” anatero Ezeulu. “Iyeyu ndi mesenjala ndipo wangopereka uthenga umene anatumidwa kudzanena. Musiyeni anene zonse zomwe watumidwa.”

“Ndamaliza,” anatero mesenjalo. “Koma ndikufuna kupempha bambo a mnyamata uyu kuti amulangize mutu wake usanagwere mumphika.”

“Ukunena zoonā kuti waperekadi uthenga wonse womwe anakutuma?”

“Inde, azungu sali ngati anthu akuda omwe amakonda kuyankhula mwachinkokota. Iye amangonena mfundo zofunika ndipo samazungulira kapena kumawononga mawu poyankhula.”

“Ulemu wanga upite kwa iwe,” anatero Ezeulu, “ndipo ndikufuna kukuuzanso kuti ndiwe wolandiridwa pakhomo pano: *Nno!*”

“Pali chinthu chimodzi chomwe ndinaiwala kutchula,” anatero mesenjala uja. “Pali anthu ambiri omwe akudikira kuti akumane ndi mzunguyu ndipo mwina n’kutheka kuti mukafunika kudikira masiku atatu kapena anayi kuti mukakumane naye. Koma ndikudziwa kuti munthu wangati inuyo sangakonde kukhala nthawi yaitali muli kunja kwa mudzi wanu. Ngati mutandigwiritsa kenakake ndikhoza kukonza zoti mukakumane naye mawa lomwelo. Chilichonse chili m’manja mwanga. Ndikanena kuti mzunguyo akumane ndi munthu winawake, zimatheka moti amakumana nayedi nthawi yomweyo. M’bale wanuyu akuuzani zimene ndimadya.” Iye anamwetulira mwaumambala ndipo kenako anatenga chipewa chake chinja n’kuchiponyanso pamutu.

“Limenelo si vuto,” anatero Ezeulu. “Ndikuganiza

kuti sindingalephere kupeza chakudya choti uike m'kamimba kako kakang'onoko. Ngati sindingakwanitse, abale angawa ali pano kuti andithandize.” Kenako anapumira kaye akumwetulira, kwinku akuyang'ana mesenjala uja yemwe anakwiya chifukwa chomunena kuti ali ndi kamimba kakang'ono. “Zimene wanenazi ndazimva. Komabe, iweyo ubwerere ndipo ndipo ukamuuze mzunguyo kuti Ezeulu samachoka pakumbi lake. Ngati akufuna kundiona ayenera kubwera kuno, adzandipeza. Mwana wa Nwodika akhozanso kudzamuperekeza ngati mmene wachitira ndi iwemu.”

“Abwenzi, koma mukudziwa chimene mukunena?” anafunsa mesenjalayo asakukhulupirira zimene anamvazo.

“Kodi iweyo ndi mesenjala kapena ayi?” anafunsa Ezeulu. “Ngati ndiwe mesenjala, ingobwerera mwaulemu kumene wachoka ndipo ukapereke uthenga umene ndakuuzawu kwa bwana wako.”

“Basi tisakangane chifukwa cha zimenezi,” anatero Akuebue akulowa nkhaniyo kuti isafike poipa kwambiri. “Zingakhale bwino mutatipatsa kampata kuti tagundane kaye mitu.”

“Mukufunanso mukambirane chiyani?” mesenjala uja anafunsa Ezeulu mokwiya. “Bwanji osangochita zimene ndakuuzanizo?”

“Nditi mutipatseko mpata pang'ono kuti tigundane mitu,” anatero Akuebue kwa mesenjalayo yemwe anamvera monyinyirika n'kutuluka panja. “Nawenso ukhoza kutuluka panja,” anateronso kwa woperekeza uja.

Ezeulu sanatsirepo mlomo pa zokambirana zomwe zinachitikazo. Pamene mesenjala komanso womuperekeza uja ankalowanso m'khumbimo, ndi Akuebue yemwe anawauza kuti chifukwa choti amalemekeza mzunguyo,

Ezeulu wavomereza kuti atumiza mwana wake Edogo kuti akatenge uthenga uliwonse umene mzunguyo akufuna kupereka kwa bambo ake.

“Malinga ndi mwambo wakwathu kuno, sitikana munthu akatiitana. Timapita ndithu. Koma ngati zimene watiuza sitikugwirizana nazo, sitizengereza kukana. Ezeulu sakufuna kukana kuitana kwa mzunguyo, choncho akutumiza mwana wake.”

“Kuteroko zimene mumataya nthawi n’kumakambirana ndi zimenezo?” anafunsa mesenjala uja.

“Inde ndi zimenezo,” anayankha Akuebue.

“Zimene mwandiuzazi sindikugwirizana nazo.”

“Ngati sukugwirizana nazo choka pakhomo pano ungatiphulitse ngozi, wozerezeka iwe,” anatero Obika. “Waona kumene chala changachi chaloza? Tuluka muno!”

“Palibe amene ali wozerezeka,” anatero Akuebue. Kenako anatembenukira kwa mesenjala uja n’kunena kuti: “Sindinayambe ndamvapo mesenjala akukana kunyamula uthenga umene wauzidwa. Pita ukauze mzunguyo zimene Ezeulu wanena. Bwanji ukunena kuti sukugwirizana ndi zimene takuuzazi. Kapenatu nawenso ndi mzungu?”

Ezeulu anatembenukira kumbali ngati alibe nazo ntchito, kenako anatolanso kamtengo kaja n’kuyamba kutozosa m’mano.

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Mesenjala ndi womuperekeza uja atangouyamba wobwera ku Okperi, Mkulu Wansembe anatumiza uthenga kwa wachikulire yemwe ankaimba ng’oma yaikulu kwambiri ija, *ikolo*, kuti aitane akuluakulu komanso *ndichie* zonse za mu Umuaro kumsonkhano dzuwa likapendeka. Posa-khalitsa *ikolo* anayamba kuyankhula kumidzi isanu ndi iwiri ya Umuaro. Akuluakulu komanso amuna onse atamva kulira kwa ng’omayo, anayamba kudzifunsa mafunso ambirimbi. Kodi unali uthenga wankhondo? Koma pali be amene anakakambanso za nkhondo m’masiku a mzungu amenewo. Ena ankaganiza kuti n’kutheka mulungu wa Umuaro waulurira wodzozedwa wake kudzera m’maloto za choipa china chomwe chikufunika kuchotsedwa mwansanga, kapena . . . koma kaya chinali chiyani—kaya kunali kuitana koti anthu akonzekere nkhondo kapena koti pakufunika kuperekedwa nsembe—zinkaoneka kuti pakufunika kuchita zinthu mwansanga. Izi zinali choncho chifukwa *ikolo* sankaimbidwa mwachisawawa pokhapokha ngati pachitika chinachake chadzidzidzi—kapena kuti, monga mmene mwambi wina umanenera, ngati nyama yamphamvu kwambiri kuposa *nte* yagwidwa pamsampha wa *nte*.

Msonkhanowu unayambika pamene nkhuu zinka-pita kukalowa ndipo unapitirirabe mpaka usiku. Zikanakhala kuti msonkhanowu unkachitika masana, ana omwe

ankanyamulira azibambo awo mipando yokhalira akana-khala akusewera m'mbali mwa msikawo, n'kumadikirira kuti msonkhanowo ukatha anyamule mipandoyo popita kunyumba. Koma palibe bambo amene ankatenga mwana wake kumsonkhano wochitika usiku. Amene ankakhala pafupi ndi msikawo ananyamula okha mipando yokhalira. Ena omwe ankakhala kutali, anatenga zikopa zambuzi zomwe anazikwapatira kunkhwapa.

Ezeulu ndi Akuebue ndi amene anali oyambirira kufika kumsikako. Koma asanakhale pansi nkomwe, amuna ambiri kuphatikizapo akuluakulu komanso madoda a mipando a midzi yonse ya Umuaro anayamba kutulukira. Poyamba munthu ankati akafika ankapereka malonje kwa anthu amene wawapeza. Koma pamene khamulo linka-kulirakulira, munthu amene wafika kumene ankangope-reka moni kwa amene wayandikana nawo, mwina ku-gwirana chanza ndi anthu atatu kapena anayi n'kukhala pansi.

Msonkhanowo unachitikira pansi pa mtengo wakale kwambiri wa *ogbu* womwe mitsitsi yosonyeza ukalamba wake inangoti yambakata. Pansi pa mtengowu m'pamene mibadwo yosiyanasiyana ya akuluakulu a Umuaro inkakumana n'kumakambirana nkhani zokulitsa mutu. Pasanapite nthawi yaitali, anthu ochuluka amene ankafunika kukhalapo pamsonkhanowu anali atafika ndipo ena anapitirizabe kutulukira m'modzim'modzi mwa apa ndi apo.

Ezeulu anayamba kukambirana ndi anthu omwe anali pafupi naye ndipo onse anavomereza kuti nthawi yakwana yoti amuna a Umuaro adziwe chimene chatsitsa dzaye kuti *ikolo* aimbidwe. Mkulu Wansembe anaimirira ndipo kenako anakokera chovala chake n'kupereka malonje. Anapemphanso amuna onse a Umuaro kuti ayankhule komanso kuchita zinthu mwachimvano cha mavu.

“Umuaro kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Kwezeunu!”

“Hem!”

“Ndikufuna kukuthokozani nonse chifukwa chosiya ntchito zomwe zikanatukula mabanja anu n’kubwera kuno mutamva kuitana. Nthawi zina munthu amatha kuitana koma anthu osabwera. Munthu wotero amafanana ndi amene akulota maloto oipa popanda womudzutsa. Ndikuthokoza kuti mwabwera mutamva kuitana kwanga m’ malo mondisiya ndekhandekha ndikulota maloto oipa.” Chapa-fupi ndi pamene Ezeulu anaima, munthu wina ankayankhulanso Ezeulu ali mkati moyankhula. Ezeulu anaponya maso ndipo anaona kuti ndi Nwaka wa ku Umunneora. Ezeulu anasiya kaye kuyankhula kwa kanthawi, kenako anayambiranso.

“Ogbuefi Nwaka, ulemu wanga upite kwa iwe,” iye anatero.

Nwaka anatsukuluza kukhosi kwake ndipo anasiya kuyankhula kuja ndipo Ezeulu anapitiriza.

“Ndikukuthokozani chifukwa cha zimene mwachita. Anthu athu amanena kuti ukamuthokoza munthu chifukwa cha zimene wachita amapeza mphamvu yopitirizira kuchita zabwino. Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene ndalakwitsa chomwe ndikupempha kuti mundikhululuki-re. Munthu sangaitane amuna a mu Umuaro popanda kuwapatsa uchema woti akonkhe kukhosi. Koma mudi-mvetse abale anga chifukwa zimene zachitika nanenso zandidzidzimutsa kwambiri monga mukudziwira kuti chakudza sichiimba ng’oma . . .”

Kenako anafotokoza nkhani ya mesenjala anabwera

kunyumba kwake uja. “Abale anga,” iye anatero powomba nkota: “zimenezo ndi zimene ndinaona m’mawa nditanogodzuka. Ogbuefi Akuebue nayenso anali pomwepo ndipo anaona zonse. Nditaswa mutu ndinalingalira kuti Umuaro akufunika kumva komanso kuona zimene ine ndamva ndi kuona, paja amati munthu akaona njoka yekha amalephera kudziwa bwinobwino ngati ili njoka wamba kapena nsato yopatulika. Mutu umodzi susenza denga. Kenako maganizo anandibwerera akuti, bwanji ndiitane amuna a mu Umuaro mawa kuti ndiwalume makutu. Koma chinachake chinandiuza kuti: Kodi ukudziwa chimene chingachitike usikuwu kapena mawa m’mawa? Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake ngakhale ndilibe uchema woti ndikupatseni, ndinaonabe kuti ndingachite bwino kukukokerani kuno. Ngati titakhalabe ndi moyo, nthawi tili nayo yambirimbi yoti tikhoza kudzaitanizana n’kumacheza kwinaku tikumwa uchema . . . Nyengo yauzimba ikadzafika tidzapita kukasaka kuseri kwa nyumba ya munthu yemwe amatentha nkhalango. Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Kwa nthawi yaitali ndithu palibe amene anaimirira kuti ayankhule. M’malomwake amuna olemekwezeka a mu Umuaro ankangoyankhula chapansipansi (zomwe nthawi zina zinkamveka ngati akung’ung’udza).

Ezeulu anakhala pansi pakampando kake akuyang’ana pansi. Iye sanayankhe pamene Akuebue anamuuza kuti wayankhula zonse zomwe zimafunika kunenedwa. Kenako Nwaka wa ku Umunneora anaimirira.

“Umuaro kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Umuaro kwenu!”

“Hem!”

“Kwekwanu ozo!”

“Hem!”

Iye anakonzanso bwinobwino nsalu yake yomwe anaikoleka paphewa. Nsaluyi inakokeka pamene anka-lozetsa mkono wake m’mwamba maulendo atatu popereka malonje ake aja.

“Tonse tamva zimene Ezeulu wanena. Mawu amene wayankhula ndi abwino ndipo ndikufuna kumuyamikirira chifukwa chotiitanitsa tonse n’kutiuzana nkhawa yake. Kodi ndikuyankhula maganizo a Umuaro?”

“Inde, pitiriza kuyankhula,” anayankha motero amuna onse a Umuaro pomupatsa mphamvu zoti apitirize kuyankhula.

“Bambo akaitana ana ake samadera nkhawa za Uchema womwe angawapatse akafika. M’malomwake ndi anawo omwe amayenera kupititsa uchema kwa bambowo. Kachiwirinso ndikufuna kukuthokozani inu wansembe wa Ulu chifukwa cha zimene mwachitazi. Kumeneko ndiye kukhala. Mwatisonyeza kuti mumatiwerengera kwambiri potiitana n’kutifotokozera nkhanu imeneyi ndipo mwa ichi, tikuti zikomo kwambiri,” anatero Nwaka poluma n’kuuzira. Koma kenako analuma zenizeni.

“Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene sindinachimvetsebe pankhani ya zimene mwatiitanira kuno. N’kuthekanso kuti enanso sanamvetse zimenezi. Ngati si choncho wina andifotokozere. Ezeulu watiuza kuti wolamulira wachizungu wamuuza kuti apite ku Okperi. Chimene chikundidabwitsa ndi ichi: Kodi pali chilichonse cholakwika kuti munthu aitane mnzake kuti apite kwawo kukacheza? Tikakhala ndi phwando, kodi si paja timaitana mabwenzi athu komanso anthu a fuko lathu kuti abwere kudzasangalala naye limodzi, kuti nawonso akadzakonza phwando lawo adzatiitane? Mzungu ndi bwenzi la Ezeulu ndipo wamuitana kuti apite kwawo. Kodi pali chodabwitsa

chilichonse pamenepa? Mzunguyotu sanaitane ine. Sanaitane Udeozo, sanaitanenso wansembe wa Idemili, sanaitane wansembe wa Eru, sanaitane wansembe wa Udo komanso sanaitane wansembe wa Ogwugwu kuti akaonane naye. Iye waitana Ezeulu. N’chifukwa chiyani wachita zimenezi? Chifukwa chakuti ndi bwenzi lake. Kapenatu Ezeulu akufuna kuti ubwenzi wawo usafike polowerana m’nyumba? Kodi akufuna kuti ubwenzi wake ndi mzunguyo ungokhala wapakamwa pokha basi? Kodi akulua-kulu anthu sananene kuti ukapereka moni wapachanza kwa munthu wakhate, amafunanso kuti umukumbatire? Kwa ineyo ndikuona kuti Ezeulu wapereka moni wapachanza kwa munthu wathupi loyera.” Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu ayambe kuwomba m’manja chapansipansi pogwirizana ndi zimene Nwaka ankanenazi ndipo ena anayamba kuseka. Monga nthenda youmitsa pakamwa, anthu ambiri ankachita mantha kunena za khate, moti nthawi zambiri ankatchula munthu amene ali ndi nthendayi mwaulemuko kuti munthu wathupi loyera.

Kuwomba m’manja kuja kunangochita chipiriganyo ndi mawu olemekesa Nwaka: “Mwini wake wa mawu,” ankatero anthuwo potamanda Nwaka. Iye anadikira kaye kuti kusekako kuzizire ndipo kenako anati: “Ngati mukufuna kuseka musamangike, mukhoza kuseka momasuka ndithu; koma kwa ineyo zimenezi si zoseketsa.” Ezeulu anali atakhalabe moyang’ana pansi pamene Nwaka ankanena mawu ake omaliza.

“Chimene ndikunena ndi ichi,” anapitiriza Nwaka, “munthu amene amabweretsa mbozi pakhomo pake sayenera kudabwa abuluzi akayamba kumuyendera. Koma ngati Ezeulu akufuna kuti uza kuti watopa ndi ubwenzi wake ndi mzungu ndipo akufuna kuuthetsa, tikufuna kumuza kuti: *Iweyo ndi amene unamanga mfundo ya*

ubwenziwu ndipo uyeneranso kuti ukudziwa mmene mfun-doyo ungaimasulire. Wapambuka tubzi tonunkha ndipo iwe mwini uyenera kudziwa kawoledwe kake komanso malo oti ukataye.” Mwamwayi chithumwa choipa cho-mwe munthu wachibweretsa atachikoletsa kumtengo si-chikhala chovuta kuchitulutsa panja ndi mtengo wo-mwewo.”

“Ndinamva anthu awiri kapena atatu akunena kuti si zabwino kumang’ung’udza molimbana ndi wansembe wa Ulu pa zimene zachitika kunyumba kwake. Ndikufuna kufunsa anthu amenewo funso ili: Kodi ulendo uno ndi woyamba kuti Ezeulu apite ku Okperi? Kodi ndi ndani amene anapereka umboni kwa mzungu amene uja pamene tinkamenya nkhondo yoteteza malo athu kuti asalandi-dwe?” Nwaka anadikira kaye kuti phokoso lomwe linali m’chigulucho lichepe. “Kwa lero ndilekeze pamenepa. Ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu.”

Pambuyo pa Nwaka, anthu enanso angapo anaimi-rira n’kuyankhula. Komabe, ngakhale kuti anthu enawa sanayankhule mwankhanza ngati Nwaka, ndi anthu awiri okha amene anatsutsa kaganizidwe kake. N’kuthekanso kuti panalinso ena omwe anali ndi maganizo omwewa, koma kungoti sanawayankhule. Anthu ambiri omwe ana-yankhula ananena kuti n’kupanda nzeru kwakukulu kuka-na kupita utaitanidwa ndi mzungu. Iwo ankafunsa kuti: Kodi mwaiwala zimene zinachitikira mafuko omwe anka-chita zosiyana ndi zimene azungu ankawauza? Nwokeke Nnabenyi anayesa kufewetsako mawu ankhanza a Nwaka aja mowonjezereka. Iye ananena kuti akuluakulu oleme-kezeka asanu ndi m’modzi apite limodzi ndi Ezeulu ku Okperi.

“Ukhoza kupita naye limodzi ngati matakoko ako akukuyabwa. N’kutheka watopa kukhala pansu moti uku-

funa kuwongolako miyendo,” anakuwa motero Nwaka.

“Ogbuefi Nwaka, chonde usayankhule mawu anga akadali mkamwa. Pajatu nawenso unaimirira pano ndipo wayankhula zonse zomwe zinali kukhosi kwako ndipo palibe amene anakudula mawu kapena kuyankhula iwe uli mkati mofotokoza maganizo ako.” Iye anabwerezanso mfundo imene ankanena ija yoti akuluakulu asanu ndi m’modzi a mu Umuaro atsagane ndi Mkulu Wansembe ku Okperi.

Ezeulu anaimiriranso. Moto waukulu womwe una-yatsidwa chapataliko unkawalitsa nkhope yake usikuwo. Ezeulu ataimirira n’kuyamba kuyankhula, pamalowo panakhala bata ngati kumanda. Pamene ankayankhula, Ezeulu anadziletsa kwambiri kuti asatulutse mkwiyo womwe unali m’chifuwa mwake. Monga mwa nthawi zonse, mkwiyo wakewu sunayambe chifukwa cha mwano umene Nwaka ananena, koma chifukwa cha mawu otsira uchi amene ananenedwa chifukwa cha mantha omwe anao-nekera pamene Nnabenyi ankayankhula. Anthu omwe anali pamsonkhanowo ankangomuyang’ana ngati makoswe osakasaka mwayi woti alume chidendene cha munthu amene ali m’tulo, makoswe omwe amati akaluma n’kuzira kuti munthu akugonayo asamve kupweteka n’kudzidzimuka.

Iye anaperekanso malonje ena ndipo kenako anayamba kuyankhula mosasonyeza kuti wakwiya.

“Ine sindinakuitaneni chifukwa choti sindikudziwa choti ndichite pa nkhaniiyi kapena chifukwa choti maso anga ayamba kuona makuti anga omwe. Chomwe ndi-mafuna kuona ndi mmene nkhaniiyi mungaimvere. Pano ndadzionera ndekha mmene mumaganizira ndipo ndakhu-tira ndi zimene ndaona. Nthawi zina tikamupatsa mwana chilazi timamupempha kuti atigawireko pang’ono. Siti-

mamupempha chifukwa choti tikufunadi kudya chilazicho, koma chifukwa choti tikufuna tione zimene angachite. Timadziwa kuti mwanayo adzakhala wopatsa kapena zangazilipaphiri tikaona zimene angachite pambuyo poti tamupempha.”

“Nonsenu mukudziwanso kuti Ezeulu si munthu woti angamathawe chifukwa choti mzungu wamutumizira uthenga woti akumufuna,” anapitiriza Ezeulu. “Ndikanakhala kuti ndaba mbuzi yake kapena kupha m’bale wake kapena kulanda mkazi wake, ndikanathawa n’kukabisala. Koma palibe chimene ndamulakwira. Zoti ndichite ndinali nditamanga kale ndisanauze *ikolo* kuti aitane nonsenu. Koma ndimaona kuti ndikachita chilichonse ndisanakuuzeni mungadzayambe kundiloza chala pamawa n’kumafunsa kuti: ‘N’chifukwa chiyani sunatiuze?’ Ndiye popeza tsopano ndakuuzani, mtima wandipepuka moti chisangalalo chadzaza mumtima mwanga. Ino si nthawi yoti ndithe mawu pano. Nthawi ikadzafika tidzayankhula mpaka kutope. Pa nthawiyo m’pamene tidzadziwe kuti mu Umuaro muno muli anthu odziwa kuzunguza lirime, mwina kuposanso Nwaka. Pa nthawi ino, ulemu wanga upite kwa nonsenu chifukwa chobwera mutamva kuitana. Paja amati kaitana kavula, ukachedwa ukakapeza katavala. Inu mwakapeza kadakali chibadwire.”

“Umuaro Kwenu!”

“Hem!”

Panali munthu m’modzi yemwe anatsatira Ezeulu kunyumba kwake madzulo umenewo. Iye anadzipereka kuti apita naye limodzi ku Okperi. Munthuyu anali mchimi-mwene wa Ezeulu wabere lina, dzina lake Okeke Onenyi. Okeke anali ng’anga wodziwika bwino kwambiri. Koma Ezeulu anakana kuti apite naye monga mmene anachitira ndi ena onse omwe anamupempha kuti atsagane naye,

kuphatikizapo mnzake wapamtima, Akuebue. Iye anali atamanga mfundo yakuti apitako yekha ndipo ngakhale mulungu wake waumwini sakanasintha zimenezi.

Ezeulu atangokana kuti atsagane naye, Okeke Onenye anadzuka n’kutsata nsana wanjira yakwawo ngakhale kunja kunali kutayamba kuthonya timadontho tamvula.

“Bwanji mudikire kuti muone mmene mitambo ili kumwambayi itayendere?” anafunsa Edogo.

“Ayi mwana wanga,” anayankha Okeke Onenye ndipo mokhala ngati zonse zili bwino anawonjezera kuti: “Ndi anthu okhawo omwe anyamula mankhwala oopsa omwe amaopa kunyowa ndi mvula.” Kenako iye anailowa mvulayo. Posakhalitsa mdima womwe unali kumwamba uja unachoka, ndipo mwa apa ndi apo kunkachita zing’aning’ani. Nthawi zina kuwala kwake kunkakhala kwamphamvu, nthawi zina kwakung’ono, ndipo nthawi zina kunkawala pang’ono ngati kuti mphepo yamphamvu yazi-mitsa moto wa kuwalako.

Okeke Onenye anapitirizabe kuyankhula moti zinkangomveka ngati akulimbana ndi mphepo komanso ziphaliwali zomwe zinkasokosa madzulowo n’kumamuperekeza mumdima watsokomolandingakuponde womwe unali bii usikuwo.

Ezeulu sananene chilichonse kuti amuletse kuilowa mvulayo. Komanso kungoti pa nthawiyo analibiretu choti angamuuze. Ezeulu sankona anthu akwawo ngati abale ake.

Koma ngakhale zikanakhala kuti ankagwirizana kwambiri, Ezeulu sakananenabe chilichonse chifukwa maganizo ake sanali m’khumbimo limodzi nawo. Koma zokhazo zomwe ananena kwa nthawi yaitali zinali zoti mvula inayamba kugwayo inali chizindikiro choti mwezi watsopano watsala pang’ono kutuluka. Koma palibe

amene anazindikira zenizeni zimene ankatanthauza.

Ezeulu ndi mchimwene wake wabere lina uja sikuti anali paudani wosamwerana madzi, kungoti umu ndi mmene ankachitiranso ndi anzake. Anthu ankadziwa kuti Ezeulu anali munthu yemwe ankadana ndi anthu onse odziwa zitsamba, omwe malinga ndi mmene iye ankakenenera, ambiri anali adyera komanso achinyengo. Ndipo nthawi zonse ankanena kuti mankhwala azitsamba enieni anapitira limodzi ndi bambo ake.

Bambo ake analidi odziwa mankhwala komanso odziwa kuchita zamatsenga. Iwo ankachita zinthu zoda bwitsa zosiyanasiyana. Koma chinthu chokhacho chomwe anthu sankachiiwala chinali choti nthawi zina ankatha kuchititsa kuti anthu asamawaone. Pa nthawi ina anthu a Umuaro ndi Aninta anali paudani woopsa. Pa nthawiyo palibe munthu yemwe ankachita chibwana chopita m'mudzi wa anzawo chifukwa cha chidani chimenechi. Koma be, zimamveka kuti Mkulu Wansembe ankadutsa ku Aninta mmene akufunira koma anthu osamuona.

Iye anakakonda kupita ndi mwana wake, Okeke Onenyi, yemwe pa nthawiyo anali wachichepere. Ankamupatsa mwanayo tsache lalifupi kuti aligwire m'dzanja lake lamanzere n'kumuuza kuti asayankhule kapena kulonjera munthu amene angakumane naye munsewu. Ankamuuzanso kuti aziyenda kumbali kwa nsewu. Mnyamatayo ankayenda kutsogolo ndipo Mkulu Wansembeyo ankamutsatira akumuona chapatali. Munthu wina yemwe ankabwera kutsogolo kwa mwanayo anangoima mwadzidzidzi ndipo anayamba kuyang'ana m'tchire lina lomwe linali pafupi ngati mmene amachitira mlenje yemwe wamva mtswatswa wa nyama. Iye anachitabe zimenezo mpaka anthuwa atadutsa ndipo pamenepo m'pamene ankatembenuka n'kupitiriza ulendo wake. Nthawi zina

munthu wodutsana nayeyo ankatembenuka n’kubwerera kumene wachokera.

Okeke Onenyi anadziwa mankhwala ambiri komanso *anwansi*, kapena kuti zamatsenga, kuchokera kwa bambo ake. Koma sanapeze mwayi wophunzira mtundu wina wamatsenga otchedwa *Oti-anya afuuzo*.

Panali ansembe owerengeka kwambiri m’mbiri yonse ya Umuaro omwe thupi lawo launsembe linakumanana ndi thupi la zamatsenga ngati mmene zinaliri ndi thupi la bambo a Ezeulu. Zangati zimenezi zikachitika, mphamvu za munthuyo zinkakhala zopanda malire.

Okeke Onenyi anakonda kunena kuti ubwenzi wosasangalatsa umene unalipo pakati pa Ezeulu, yemwe anali mchimwene wake wabere lina, unalipo chifukwa choti Ezeulu sankasangalala ndi kugawana mphamvu komwe kunachitika pakati pawo, kuti wina anatenga unsembe pomwe wina anatenga matsenga. “Koma amaiwala,” ankatero Okeke Onenyi, “kuti kudziwa zitsamba komanso *anwansi* ndi zoti zimachita kulembedwa pachikhatho cha munthu asanabadwe. Bambo athu sanangolota tsiku lina n’kuganiza zoti andiphunzitse zamankhwala. Ndiye n’chifukwa chiyani Ezeulu amandichitira nsanje? Kodi Anayamba wandimvapo ndikudandaula kuti iyeyo anakhala wansembe?”

Monga mmene tingayembekezerere, mmenemunso ndi mmene anthu omwe ankadana ndi Ezeulu ankaonera ubale umene unalipo pakati pa Okeke Onenyi ndi Ezeulu. Iwo ankafulumira kunena kuti chimene chinkachititsa ubale wodwalitsa m’mimbawu pakati pa Okeke Onenyi ndi Ezeulu n’choti Ezeulu anali wodzikonda komanso ankachitira nsanje m’bale wakeyo. Anthuwa anayamba kukamba kwambiri zimenezi ataona zimene zinachitika pamene Obika ankatenga mkazi wake. Iwo ankati, n’chi-

fukwa chiyani Ezeulu sanaitane m'bale wakeyo koma kuitana sing'anga wachabechabe yemwe ankachita kulephera ndi kudyetsa banja lake komwe?

Koma panalinso ena ngati Akuebue omwe anka-muikira kumbuyo Ezeulu. Anthuwa ankaona kuti n'kutheka kuti pali chinachake choipa chimene Okeke Onenyi anachitira Ezeulu. Koma kungoti sankachitchula. Komabe, chomwe ankadziwa n'choti chimene anachitacho si chinthu choti munthu angachitire m'bale wake, ndipo ndi chosakhululukidwa. Koma chodabwitsa n'choti Ezeulu sankauza aliyense chimene m'bale wakeyo analakwa, ngakhale mnzake wapamtima. Choncho anthu omwe anali kumbali yake ankangoganizira zomwe mwina n'kutheka zinachititsa kuti pakhale kusagwirizanaku. Ena ankati Okeke Onenyi anamanga mimba ya mkazi woyamba wa Ezeulu atangobereka naye ana atatu okha.

“Koma zimenezo si zoona,” ambiri ankatero akamva zimenezi.

“Asing'anga onse oipa timawadziwa bwino mu Umuaro muno, koma Okeke Onenyi sali m'gulu la anthu amenewo. Iye sangachite matsenga oipa n'kutemberera mzimayi yemwe sanamulakwire chilichonse, nanjinanjinso mzimayo n'kukhala mkazi wa mchimwene wake.”

“Koma mumaiwala kuti Okeke Onenyi amasungira chakukhosi Ezeulu,” enawo ankatero. “Kodi mwaiwala kuti bambo awo ankachititsa Okeke kuganiza kuti adzakhala wansembe ndipo pamene bambowo ankamwalira anayamba kukaikira zimene Ula unanena zoti Ezeulu ndi amene anasankhidwa kuti akhale wansembe?”

“Mwinadi zinatero,” enawonso ankatero. “Koma ifeyo timadziwa bwino asing'anga athu ndipo Okeke Onenyi sanayambepo waimbidwa mlandu wotseka mimba ya mzimayi. Kuwonjezera apo, asing'anga omwe ama-

tseka mimba za azimayi komanso amene amadya nyama ya anthu sakhala ndi ana. Nanga tangoonani kuchuluka kwa ana aamuna ndi aakazi omwe ali pakhomu la Okeke Onenyi!”

Mawu amenewa sankayankhidwanso makamakanso akanena kuti mnzake wapamtima wa Okeke Onenyi anali mwana wa Ezeulu, Edoگو, yemwenso anali mwana wa mayi yemwe ankanena kuti anamutseka mimbayo. Kunena zoonā, ubwenzi womwe unalipo pakati pa Edoگو ndi amalume akewa unkamunyansa kwambiri Ezeulu. Mwina ankakwiya kwambiri chonchi akamva anthu akuyerekezera kuti zigoba zomwe Edoگو ankasema ndi zabwino mofanana ndi mankhwala omwe Okeke Onenyi ankapanga.

“Anthu awiri amenewa,” iye anatero tsiku lina, “ali ngati mtondo wakutha ndi mtedza wowola wa gwalangwa. Zonse ndi zosathandiza.”

Kwa masiku awiri kapena atatu tsopano, Kaputeni Winterbottom ankamva kutopa kwambiri komanso kuphwaya kwa thupi. Mvula yomwe inayamba kugwa ija sinamubweretsere mtendere womwe ankayembekezera. Nkhama zake zinkaoneka zoyera kwambiri ndipo mapazi ake ankamva kuzizira osati pang’ono. Iye sankafuna kudwalanso malungo. Komabe izi zinali zizindikiro zoti adwalanso matendawa. Ngakhale zinali choncho, Winterbottom sankachita mantha kudwalanso matendawa chifukwa thupi lake linali litapima. Iye anali atazolowerana ndi matendawa moti ankati akamugwira ankangogona pansi masiku angapo, kenako n’kudzukanso.

Tony Clarke anadabwa kwambiri ndi thupi la na-

mandwayu. “Ngati mukuona zizindikiro za malungo, bwanji osapita kukaonana ndi adotolo,” iye anatero podziwa kuti zimenezi ndi zimene azungu obwera kumene ankayenera kuchita akayamba kumva kutsinatsina m’thupi.

“Adotolo? Koma zoonza ndikaonane ndi adotolo chifukwa cha malungo? Ndili ndi zambiri zochita. Mwina ukanakhala iweyo. Popeza wangobwera kumene, ukuyenera kuthamangira kuchipatala ukaona zizindikiro za malungo. Ukufunika kumachita zinthu mochenjera, apo ayi ulisiya dzikoli likadakoma.

“Macmillan anatsogola chifukwa sanatsatire malangizo omwe ndinamupatsa. Koma ineyo ndi chitsulo cha njanji. Ndakhala ndikudwala malungo chaka chilichonse kwa zaka khumi, moti ndinasiya kuda nazo nkhawa. Munthu akakhala kuti amadwala pafupipafupi amasiya kuda nazo nkhawa. Chimene ndikufunika kusintha ndi mpweya basi, ndingochoka n’kukapitidwa mphepo ina kwinakwake ndipo sabata ikamatha undiona ndikubwerako nditanenepa. Ndikuganiza zopita kutchuthi ku Enugu.”

Iye anali atakonzazopita ku Enugu ndipo ankafuna anyamuke pakangotha masiku awiri. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake ankafuna kuthana ndi nkhanizolongamfumu ya ku Umuaro asananyamuke. Iye ankaona kuti sizengatheke kumaliza nkhaniyi m’masiku awiri okha, komabe ankafunitsitsa kuti akapita kumalikuluko akafoto-koze kuti dongosolo lolonga mfumuyo lili mkati. Iye ankafuna kusiyam’nyumba muli bwino n’kumayembekezera kuti adzamupeza mukadali mmene anamusiya. Choncho analemba chikalata cholonga mfumuyo n’kuchisiyam’manja mwa Tony Clarke. Iye analembanso zonsezofunikira papapala lina monga zomwe Clarke ankafunika

kukambirana ndi munthu yemwe ankafuna kumulonga ufumuyo. “Lero ndatumiza mesenjala ku Umuaro kuti akabwere ndi Ezeulu kuti tidzayambepo kukambirana zomulonga ufumu.”

Tikakambirana naye zimenezi ndisankha tsiku loti tidzamulonge ufumuwo m’tsogolo pamaso pa akuluakulu komanso *ndichie* za fuko lake. Kaputeni Winterbottom ankakonda kudzidzimutsa azungu anzake ndi mawu a chiIbo chomwe ankanena kuti amatha kuyankhula bwi-nobwino.

Atamaliza kukonza dongosolo lolonga Ezeulu kuti akhale mfumu, zinali zomveka kuti Kaputeni Winterbottom akwiye koopsa mesenjala uja atamuuza yankho lamwano lomwe wansembe wodzikuzayo anayankha. Posakhalitsa analamula kuti wansembeyo amangidwe ndipo anauza apolisi awiri kuti alawire m’mawa n’kupita ku Umuaro kuti akamukwidzinge ndi unyolo n’kubwera naye.

“Akangobwera naye,” Winterbottom anatero kwa Clarke, “umutsekere kaye m’ndende. Sindikufuna kuku-mana naye mpaka ndikadzabwera pa ulendo wanga wa ku Enugu. Ndikufuna kumupatsa phunziro pang’ono. Ikamadzafika nthawi imeneyo adzakhala ataphunzira mwambo. Sindingalole kuti anthu am’mudzi afike pomandisewere-tsa chonchi.”

Mwina n’kutheka kuti mkwiyo umenewu ndi ume-ne unachititsa malodza omwe anatsatirapo. Mwinanso n’kutheka kuti wantchito wake ankanena zoonza kuti Ezeulu anali atamulodza kuti adwale matendawo. M’mawa wa tsiku limenelo, apolisi awiri aja atangonyamuka kuti akamange Ezeulu, Kaputeni Winterbottom anagwa pansi mwadzidzidzi n’kuyamba kuyankhula zosamveka ngati wopenga. Chinthu chokhacho chimene ankayankhula chi-

nali choti: “Mapazi anga akuzizira; ndiikeni botolo la madzi otentha kumapazi anga!” Wantchito wakeyo anathetsadi madzi ndipo anawaika m’botolo n’kuliika kumapazi a Winterbottom. Koma Winterbottom sanamvebe kutentha moti anadandaula kuti madziwo si otentha mokwanira. Wantchitoyo anapunguliramo madzi otentha kwambiri, koma Winterbottom ananenabe kuti madziwo sakutentha mogwira mtima. Iye anapitirizabe kuwonjezera madzi otenthawo, koma Kaputeni Winterbottom ananenabe kuti sakutentha mokwanira. Pamene Tony Clarke (yemwe sankatha kuyendetsa galimoto) ankakaitana Wade kuti atengere Kaputeni kuchipatala chomwe chinali pamtunda wa mamailosi asanu ndi limodzi pogwiritsa ntchito mugalimoto yakale ya Ford, mapazi a Winterbottom anali atayamba kukupuka. Koma zimenezi sizinatulukiridwe kufikira tsiku lotsatira atafika kuchipatalako.

Clarke ndi Wade anadabwa kwambiri, mwinanso kuchita manyazi pang’ono pamene Mayi Mary Savage, yemwe anali m’mishonale wachizimayi komanso woyang’anira chipatalacho, analira komanso kubalalikiratu ndi nkhwawa ataona Kaputeni Winterbottom akudwala mwakayakaya. Mayi ameneyu sankachita zinthu ngati munthu wamkazi, anali wolimba mtima kwambiri moti zinali zodabwitsa kumuona akulira. Iye ankangokhalira kuitana kuti, “Thom, Thom,” lomwe linali dzina loyamba la Winterbottom ndipo mayiyu ankachita zinthu ngati wayamba wasiya kaye udokotala wake. Koma kusokonezeka kwa-keku kunangochitika nthawi yochepa. Posakhalitsa mtima wake unakhala m’malo ndipo anayamba kusamalira wodalayo. Komabe kubalalika kuja kunachitika kwa kanthawi ndithu moti anamwino ena anaona n’kuyamba kufalitsa nkhanayi pachipatalapo komanso m’mudzi wa Nkisa ndipo nkhanu yoti mayi wouma mtimawa amalira

inawandiratu. Kuchipatalaku komanso m'mudzi wa Nkisa, Mayi Savage ankadziwika kuti Omesike, kutanthauza *Munthu Wochita Zinthu Mopanda Chisoni*, ndipo sankaganiza kuti tsiku lina angadzalire ataona wodwala akubwera kuchipatalacho. Komanso sankaganiza nkomwe kuti munthu ameneyo angadzakhale Kaputeni Winterbottom, yemwe ena pomujeda ankangomutchula kuti mwamuna wake.

Kusokonekera maganizo kwa Winterbottom kunachitika kwa masiku atatu ndipo pa nthawi yonse Mayi Savage sankachoka pambali pa kama wake wodwalira. Iye anasinthanso tsiku Lachitatu lomwe ankachita maopaleshoni. Anthu am'mudzi uja ankatchula tsiku lachitatu kuti *Tsiku Lodula Matumbo a Anthu*. Nthawi zonse tsiku limeNELI linkakhala lomvetsa chisoni kwambiri ndipo kamsika kakang'ono komwe kanayamba panja pa chipata cholowera kuchipatalaku kuti anthu odwala komanso owasamalira asamavutike akafuna kugula zinthu, kankakhala ndi azimayi ochepa kusiyana ndi masiku ena onse. Ena ankaonanso kuti patsiku limeneli kumwamba kunkasinthiratu. Zinkangokhala ngati nakonso kunkalira maliro a anthu omwe ankamwalira patsikuli akupangidwa opaleshoni ndi dokotala wachizimayiyu.

Mayi Savage anayang'ana pepala lomwe analembapo anthu omwe ankafunika kuwapanga opaleshoni ndipo anaona kuti palibe munthu amene ankafunika kuthandizidwa mwachanguchangu. Kenako anawauza kuti adzabwerenso Lachisanu. Kaputeni Winterbottom anali atayamba kupezako bwino ndipo chiyembekezo choti akhala ndi moyo chinayamba kuoneka. Tsiku lotsatira kapena masiku awiri otsatira, anamwino ankafunika kumenya nkondo yaikulu yothandiza Winterbottom kulimbana ndi matenda omwe ankafuna kumutengera kulichetewa.

Iye anaikidwa m'chipinda chapadera ndipo analimo yekha basi. Palibe amene ankaloledwa kulowamo kupatulapo Mayi Savage komanso mchemwali wake wochokera ku Ulaya.

Wantchito wa Kaputeni Winterbottom, John Nowdika, anauzidwa kuti atsagane ndi apolisi awiri omwe ankapita ku Umuaro monga mmene anachitira poperekeza mesenjala uja. Koma m'maganizo mwake analumbira kuti sadzayerekezanso kutengera anthu ochokera kuboma kwa anthu a mtundu wake. Mfundo imeneyi anaimanga pamenene anamva zoti ulendo uno apolisi awiri aja atenga mifuti komanso auzidwa kuti akamange Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu. Koma papeza sizikanatheka kuti auze mbuye wakeyo kuti: "Ulendo uno sindipita," iye anavomera monyinyirika ndipo anakonza pulani yozembera. M'mawa wa tsiku lotsatira pamene apolisi awiri aja ankafika kunyumba kwake tambala woyamba atangolira, anamupeza akunjemenjera ngati munthu wodwalika ndi matenda a *iba*.

Iye anali atadzikutira ndi bulangete lomwe Kaputeni Winterbottom anapereka kwa mwana wake, yemwe mkazi wake anabereka miyezi inayi yapitayo. John anakwanitsa kutchula mapu a ku Umuaro kwa apolisi awiriwo. "Mukakangofika ku Umuaro," iye anatero, "mwana aliyense akhoza kukakulozerani kunyumba kwa Ezeulu." Zimene ananenazi zinali zoona.

Anthu awiriwo analowa mu Umuaro anthu akudya kadzutsa. Posakhalitisa anakumana ndi munthu atasenza mtsuko wa uchema ndipo anamuimitsa.

"Kodi kunyumba kwa Ezeulu ndi kuti?" anafunsa Kopolo Matthew Nweke. Munthuyo anayang'ana amuna awiri omwe anavala mayunifomuwa mowakayikira kwammbiri.

"Ezeulu," iye anayankha patapita nthawi yaitali

ndipo pa nthawiye ankaoneka kuti ankasinkhasinkha funsolo. “Ezeulu wake uti?”

“Ndi a Ezeulu angati amene umawadziwa?” anafunanso Kopolo uja mokwiya.

“Ndi a Ezeulu angati amene ndikuwadziwa?” anabwereza funsolo munthu uja. “Sindikudziwa Ezeulu aliyense.”

“N’chifukwa chiyani wandifunsa kuti Ezeulu wake uti ngati sikudziwa aliyense?”

“N’chifukwa chiyani ndakufunsani—”

“Tseka pakamwa pakopo nsanga, wopusa iwe!” anatero wapolisiyo m’Chingerezi chobolobosha.

“Ndanena kuti sindikudziwa Ezeulu aliyense. Ndine mlendo kudera lino.”

Anthu enanso awiri anaimitsidwa ndipo nawonso anayankha chimodzimodzi. M’modzi mwa anthuwa ananena kuti Ezeulu yemwe akumudziwa ndi wa ku Umuofia, womwe unali ulendo woyenda tsiku lonse kulowera kotulukira dzuwa.

Apolisi awiriwa sanadabwe ndi zimenezi. Njira yomwe ankafunika kugwiritsa ntchito kuti athuwo awalozere kunyumba kwa Ezeulu inali kuwaopseza basi. Koma anali atachenjezedwa ndi azungu kuti asamagwiritse ntchito mphamvu kapena kuopseza anthu, ndiponso sankayenera kugwiritsa ntchito unyolo pokhapokha ngati munthu akuchita makani. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake anadziletsa kwa nthawi yaitali kuti asaopseze anthuwo. Koma tsopano anazindikira kuti akapanda kuchita chinachake chooneka, azungulira mu Umuaro tsiku lonse, koma sakafika kunyumba ya Ezeulu. Choncho munthu wotsatira amene anakumana naye anamuwaza mbama n’kuyamba kumuopseza. Kutu munthuyo anene chilungamo anamuonetsanso unyolo uja. Zimenezi zinachititsadi kuti munthuyo

aulule. Iye anauza apolisiwo kuti amutsatire. Kenako anawatengera pamphambano yopita kunyumba kwa Ezeulu yemwe ankafunayo, kenako anawalozera.

“Si mwambo wathu,” anauza apolisi aja, “kulozera anthu angongole kunyumba kwa m’bale wathu. Choncho sindipita nanu limodzi.” Zimene ananenazi zinali zomveka ndipo apolisiwo anamusiya.

Atangomusiya, munthuyo analiyatsa liwiro losiya fumbi kuti anthu a nyumba zapafupi asamuone nkhope. Ngati alipo ena omwe anamuona, mwina anangoona nkhoongo ndi nsana wake basi. Apolisowo anafika panyumba ya Ezeulu ndipo anapeza mzimayi wachikulire akutafuna mkamwa mopanda kathu. Iye anawayang’ana modabwa ndipo ankaoneka kuti sakumvetsa funso limene apoliwo ankamufunsa. Malinga ndi mmene ankaonekera, gogoyo anali munthu woti sangakumbukire ndi dzina lake lomwe.

Mwamwayi kamnyamata kena kanatulukira phale lili m’manja kuti kadzapale moto. Ndi kamnyamata kame-neka kamene kanawalondolera apolisiwa njira yopita kunyumba kwa Ezeulu. Kamnyamatako katangonyamuka ndi apolisiwo, nkhalamba yoiwala dzina lake ija inadzuka mwachanguchangu n’kutenga ndodo yake n’kuthamangira kunyumba kwa mayi a mnyamata uja paliwiro lodabwitsa kwambiri kuti ikanene zimene mwana wawo anachita. Kenako inabwerera kukhumbi lake—ikuyenda mwapang’onopang’ono, ndondo ili chakunsana n’kumayenda mwawerawera. Dzina la nkhalamba imeneyi linali Nwanyieke, nkhalamba yamasiye yomwe inalibe ndi mwana yemwe. Gogo Nwanyieke atangofika kunyumba kwawo kuja, anamva kamnyamata kaja, Obielue, kakulira ngati wina wakaphinya.

Posakhalitsa apolisi aja anafika kukhumbi la Ezeulu. Iwo ankaonekeratu kuti sakufuna zinthu zachibwana.

Ankayankhula mwaukali kwambiri, akuonetsa zida zawo zonse kuti wina akachita mfwee amuponde pakhosi.

“Kodi ndi ndani pakati panupa amene dzina lake ndi Ezeulu?” anafunsa Kopolo uja. “Ezeulu wake uti?” anafunsa Edogo.

“Osandifunsanso kuti Ezeulu wake uti, wina akan difunsanso funso limeneli ndimubwanyula kukamwa n’kugulula tinthagala tamano ake. Ndafunsa kuti Ezeulu ndi ndani pakati panupa?”

“Inenso ndafunsa kuti Ezeulu wake uti? Kapenatu simukudziwa munthu amene mukufuna?” Amuna anayi omwe anali m’khumbi mwa Ezeulu sananene chilichonse. Posakhaltisa azimayi anadzaza pakhomo lomwe anthu ankadutsa akamachoka m’khumbimo n’kumapita kuseri. Onse anali ndi nkhwana komanso mantha obwadamutsa m’mimba.

“Chabwino,” anatero Kopolo uja m’Chingerezi.

“Ndati mudiuze kuti pakati panupa Ezeulu ndi ndani? Bwanawe, tandipatsa chibangiri chija.” Mawu omalizawa ankapita kwa wapolisi mnzake uja, yemwe nthawi yomweyo anatulutsa unyolo womwe unali m’thumba mwake.

Kwa anthu am’mudzi, unyolo kapena kuti *iga* chinali chimodzi mwa zida zoopsa kwambiri za azungu. Ena ankangoutchula kuti zibangiri za azungu. Anthu akaona munthu wamphamvu akudzikodzera kwinku akulira ndi unyolo n’kumalephera kudzipulumutsa, ankachita mantha kwambiri. Zinkakhala zochititsa manyazi kwambiri kuona munthu wanzeru zake akubuula ndi ululu moti ankaona kuti chilango chimenechi ndi choyenera anthu openga omwe amavutitsa m’mudzi pomenya anthu.

Ndiye pamene apolisi oopsawo anaonetsa unyolo wawo n’kuyamba kulowera kwa Edogo, Akuebue analu-

mphira pakati pawo monga munthu wamkulu m'nyumba-mo ndipo anayamba kuyankhula mowakhazika mtima pansi apolisiwo. Akuebue anauza apolisiwo kuti asapsere mtima Edogo. "Iye wangoyankhula monga mmene ana ambiri amayankhulira. Monga mukudziwira, chinenero cha achinyamata chimakhala chosamangirira pamodzi, chimangokhala chopasula mudzi basi. Koma anthu akulu-akulu amayankhula zinthu zomanga mudzi. Kwathu kuno kuli mwambi wakuti, ngati munthu wamkulu ali pakhomu, samangoyang'ana mbuzi ikuvutika kubereka." Iye anawauza kuti Ezeulu ndi mwana wake abulika m'mawa kwambiri kupita ku Okperi kuti akakumane ndi mzungu yemwe anamuitana. Apolisiwo anayang'anizana. Iwo anali atakumanadi ndi munthu wachikulire yemwe anali limodzi ndi mnyamata wina yemwe ankaoneka kuti ndi mwana wake. Anawakumbukira chifukwa ndi anthu okhawo omwe anakumana nawo akulowera kumene iwowo anka-chokera komanso chifukwa choti munthu ndi mwana wakeyo anali ooneka mosiyana ndi anthu ena onse am'chigawochi.

"Ndi wooneka bwanji?" anafunsa Kopolo uja.

"Ndi wamtali kwambiri ngati mtengo wa *iroko* ndipo khungu lake ndi lowala ngati dzuwa. Ali mnyamata ankatchedwa *Nwa-anyanwu*."

"Nanga mwana wakeyo amaoneka bwanji?"

"Amaoneka mofanana ndi bambo ake. Palibe kusiyana."

Anthu awiriwo anayamba kunong'onezana m'chinenero cha azungu mosonyeza kuti agoma ndi anthu am'mudziwo.

"*Sometine na dat two person we cross for road* (Kukhala ngati anthu ake ndi aja takumana nawo tikubwera)," anatero Kopolo uja m'Chingerezi chothyokathyoka.

“Sometine na dem (Kukhala ngatidi ndi omwewo),” anayankha motero mnzakeyo m’Chingerezi chofumbwa. *“But we no go return back his like dat. All dis waka wey we waka come here no fit for nating* (Koma sitingango-bwereranso chonchi. Sitingalawire kubwera kuno n’kuningochokako chimanjamanja).”

Atamaliza kudzilumaluma ndi chizungu chawocho, Kopolo uja anaganiza kwa kanthawi. Ngakhale anaona kuti anthu aja anamuuzza zoonā, ankaonabe kuti angachite bwino kuti awachangamutse pang’ono. Ankafuna kuti awaphinye mpaka kuwatulutsa nthangala ngati mmene amachitira munthu akamaswa mtedza wa kola.

Iye anayankhula nawo mu chilbo: “Tikuganiza kuti mukutinamiza, choncho tikufuna kutsimikizira chifukwa tikapita chimanjamanja mzungu amene watituma akatipatsa chilango. Ndiye zimene tingachite ndi zoti tikutengani awirinu—tikumangani unyolo—ndipo tipita nanu ku Okperi. Ezeulu tikakamupeza kumeneko tikakumasulani, koma tikakangopanda kumupeza-a . . .” Iye anamaliza chiganizo chimenechi akuyendetsa mutu wake, mawu ake akumveka mwakuthwa ngati lumo. “Pakati panupa ndi ndani amene titatsagane naye?”

Anthu anali m’khumbimo anayamba kunong’onezana mwamantha ndipo Akuebue anauza anthu ochokera kubomawo (ankawatchula kuti anthu ochokera ku *gorme-nt* chizungu chosathyakuka cha mawu akuti boma) kuti akhulupirire zimene anenazo chifukwa ndi zoonā. “Kodi tingapindulepo chiyani ngati titapusitsa nthumwi zocho-kerā kwa mzungu?” iye anafunsa. “Ndipo ifeyo sikuti tingathawe ayi? Ngati mutapita ku Okperi n’kukapeza kuti Ezeulu kulibe, mukabwere mudzatigwire, osati awiri tokhawe ayi, koma tonse.”

Kopolo uja anaganiziranso zimenezi ndipo kenako

anagwirizana nazo. “Koma mukangoyerekeza kutipusitsa tikuonetsani chinameta nkhang mpala. Mzimu wa gule ukakuchezera umafunika kuukhazika mtima pansi popo-nya mphatso pamadindo a mapazi ake. Mzungu ndi mzimu wagule walero. Choncho, sitikukayikira kuti mutikonzera kenakake.”

“Zoonadi,” anatero Akuebue, “mzimu wagule wamasiku ano ndi mzungu komanso nthumwi zake.”

Mkazi wamkulu wa Ezeulu anauzidwa kuti akonze chilazi ndiwo zake nkukhu. Chakudyacho chitapsa anthu awiriwo anadya n’kutsitsira ndi uchema. Atapuma pang’ono, anatsanzika kuti akupita. Akuebue anawayamikirira chifukwa cha kubwera kwawo ndipo anawauza kuti akanapeza mwini wapakhomopa akanawalandira bwino kwambiri chifukwa ndi wodziwa kuchereza alendo. Koma kodi akanalandira “kola” wamng’ono yemwe ankafuna kuwapatsa? Iye anaika atambala awiri pamaso pawo ndipo Edogo anaika pambali pa nkukuzo mbale ina, momwe munali 2 shiling’izi. Kopolo uja anawathokoza, ndipo pa nthawi imodzimodziyo anawachenjeza za kuopsa kowapusitsa. Iye anawauza kuti ngati atabwerera n’kukapeza kuti awabwatika zoti Ezeulu wapiti ku “gorment” adzawapotokola makosi n’kuwaonetsa makutu awo omwe.

Kugwa kwadzidzidzi kwa Kaputeni Winterbottom pa tsiku limene anumaliza apolisi kuti akamange Mkulu Wansembe wa ku Umuaro kunali kodabwitsa kwambiri. Munthu woyamba kunena zimenezi anali John Nwodika, yemwe anali wantchito wa Kaputeni Winterbottom. Iye ananena kuti zimene amaopa pamene amanamizira ku-dwala zinali zimenezi. Iye ankaona kuti wansembeyo

wachesula Kaputeni Winterbottom. Ankauza anthu kuti mphamvu zoti Winterbottom akhale ndi moyo kapena ayi zili ndi mwini tsengalo.

“Ndinanenatu ine!” iye anauza wantchito mnzake pambuyo poti mbuye wawo watengeredwa kuchipatala. “Kodi umaganiza kuti ndine wozungulira mutu pokana kutsagana ndi apolisi awiri aja? Ndinawauza ine kuti Mkulu Wansembe wa ku Umuaro si munthu wosewera naye kapena kumamutengera kuntoso ngati maliro a njoka. Sali ngati thobwa lozizira loti n’kulimwa mofulumira. Iye uja ndi nkhumang’ona.” John anayankhula zime-nezi modzimva kwambiri.

“Mbuye wathu uja amaganiza kuti popeza iyeyo ndi mzungu, matsenga kapena mankhwala achikuda sangamuchite kanthu.” Kenako anayamba kuyankhula Chingerezi kuti wantchito wa Clarke yemwe anali atangolowa kumene apindule nawo. Munthuyu sankamva chiIbo. Nayenso anayamba kutakasa Chingerezi chopanda maverebu n’kunena movutikira kuti: *“I use to tellam say blackman juju no be something wey man fit take play. But when I tellam na so so laugh im de laugh. When he finish laugh he call john and I say Massa. He say you too talk bush talk. I tellam say O-o, one day go be one day. You no see now?”* (Ndinkamuuza ine kuti mankhwala achikuda ndi oopsa moti osamachita nawo masewera. Koma ndikamamuuza ankangoseka. Akamaliza kuseka ankandiitana kuti John, ndipo ine ndinkamuuza kuti ine Sah. Iye ankandiuza kuti ndimayankhula zopanda nzeru. Koma ndinkamuuza kuti O-o, tsiku lina mudzazona. Ndiye mwaona lero zimene zamuchitikirazi?)”

Nkhani yonena za matsenga a Ezeulu zinafalikira paboma ponse. Nkhaniyi inkafalira limodzi ndi nkhanu ya kugwa kodabwitsa kwa Kaputeni Winterbottom.

Pamene Clarke ankabwera kuchokera kuchipatala kuja, wantchito wake anamufunsa kuti bwana wamkulu ali bwanji. Iye anangopukusa mutu n’kunena kuti: “Zinthu sizili bwino ngakhale pang’ono, moti ndikuchita mantha.”

“Pepani Sah,” anatero wantchitoyo akuoneka kuti akuda nkhawa. “Anthu akunena kuti bwana wamkuluyo wachita kulodzedwa ndi . . .”

“Pita ukandiikire madzi osamba. Upita koma?” Clarke anali atatoperatu ndipo sanali moti n’kumamvetsera wantchito wakeyo. Choncho anataya mwayi womvetsera chimene chinadwalitsa Kaputeni, nkhani yomwe inali itafalilatu kuboma konseko ndipo kenako mu Okperi yense. Patatha masiku awiri m’pamene ankamva nkhanayi kuchokera kwa Wright.

Antchito ena a panyumba zapabomapo anali akudikira kukhitchini kwake kuti amve zokhudza matendawo kuchokera kwa mnzawo uja. Iye anapita kukaika madzi osamba kubafa ndipo atabwerako anapita kukawanong’oneza kuti Clarke wanena kuti sizikudziwika ngati Kaputeni angachire, ndiponso kuti Clarke wanena kuti nayenso akuchita mantha.

Kenako chakumadzulo, Clarke ndi Wade anabwereranso kuchipatala kuja. Iye sanaonane ndi wodwala kapena namwino, koma Sisitere Warner anawauza kuti pali be chimene chasinthu. Kwa nthawi yoyamba kungochokera pamene matendawo anayambika, Tony Clarke anayamba kuda nkhawa kwambiri. Iwo anabwerera ndipo njira yonse sanayankhule chilichonse.

Atangofika kunyumba anapeza mesenjala ali panja pa nyumba yake.

“*Deven Sah?* (Mwaswera bwanji Sah?)” anatero mesenjala uja.

“*Good evening,* (Ndaswera bwino)” anayankha

Clarke.

“Sing’anga woopsa wa ku Umuaro uja wabwera.” Iye anayankhula mwamantha mokhala ngati akupereka uthenga woti kubomako kwafika munthu yemwe akudwala matenda opatsirana a nthomba, omwe ndi oopsa kwambiri.

“Wati bwanji?”

Mesenjalayo anafotokozanso ndipo pamenepo m’pamene Clarke anamvetsa kuti akunena za Ezeulu.

“Mutsekereni m’ndende mpaka m’mawa.”

Atangonena zimenezi Clarke anayamba kuyenda kuti akalowe m’nyumba mwake.

“Kodi Sah, mwanena kuti ndikamutsekere m’nde-nde?”

“Inde ndatero,” anakalipa Clarke. “Kodi ndiwe gonthi?”

“Ayi Sah si ine wogontha, koma . . .”

“Ndiye basitu nyamuka upite ukachite zimene ndakuuza!”

Mesenjalayo anatuma anthu kuti akasese m’ndendemo komanso kuti akayalemo mkeka watsopano kuti womangidwayo aziganiza kuti ndi chipinda chogona ale-ndo. Kenako anapita kwa Ezeulu yemwe anali atakhala m’nyumba ya khoti limodzi ndi Obika. Anthuwa anakhala mmenemu kungochokera pamene anafika. Aliyense ankayankhula nawo mwaulemu kwambiri.

“Bwana wamkulu wachizungu akudwala, koma ena omwe atsala akunena kuti akulandirani,” mesenjalayo ananama choncho. “Wanena kuti leroro kwada ndiye aonana nanu mawa m’mawa.”

Ezeulu sanamuyankhe chilichonse. Anangomutsa-tira kundende kuja ndipo kenako analowa n’kukhala pamkeka. Nayenso Obika anakhala pansi. Kenako Ezeulu

anatulutsa botolo lake la fodya wofwenkha.

“Tikutumizirani nyali yoti muziunikira,” anatero mesenjala uja.

Kenako posakhalitsa, John Nwodika anabwera ndi mkazi wake yemwe anasenza thungwa pamutu pake. Iye anatula n’kuliika pansi ndipo atavundukula, anaona kuti munali phiri la *foofoo* komanso mbale ya masamba owawasa. Kenako John Nwodika anatema nthongo ya *foofoo*, n’kusunsa mudiwo zija ndipo anaponya mkamwa n’kumeza pofuna kuwatsimikizira kuti sanawathiriremo chiphe. Ezeulu anamuthokoza John ndi mkazi wakeyo (yemwe anazindikira kuti ndi mwana wa mnzake wa ku Umuagu) koma anakana kudya chakudyacho.

“Chomwe ndikufuna panopa si chakudya ayi,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Pempherani, kenako mudyem ngakhale nthongo imodzi,” anatero mwana wa Nwodika. Koma munthu wachikulireyo sanalole kuchita zimenezi.

“Obika adya m’malo mwa ineyo.”

“Nkhukutu ikamatolatola si mbuzi imene imakhuta,” anatero John, koma munthu wachikulireyo anakana kudya.

Kopolo Matthew Nweke yemwe anapita ku Umuaro ndi wapolisi wina anafika kwawo ndipo anapeza azikazi awo akulira mosatonthozeka. Nantindi wa anthu anali m’nyumba yawo yopanda chipinda. Iye anadabwa kwambiri ndi zimenezi moti anayamba kuganiza kuti mwana wake wamng’ono yemwe ankadwala chikuku wamwalira. Iye anathamangira kwa mwana wakeyo yemwe anagona pamkeka n’kukamugwira koma anapeza kuti adakali

m' maso.

“Chachitika n'chiyani?” iye anafunsa.

Palibe amene anayankha. Kopoloyo yemwe anthu ankangomutchula kuti “Couple” polephera kuyankhula Chingerezechichi momasuka ndi lirime lawo, anatembenukira kwa wapolisi wina yemwe anali m'chipindacho ndipo anamufunsa funso. Munthuyo anachotsa chitsokotsoko ndipo anamuuzza kuti samayembekezera kuti amuona iyeyo ndi mnzake anapita naye ku Umuaroyo akubwerako amoyo, makamakanso chifukwa choti munthu amene anapita kukamumangayo anabwera ali yekhayekha. “Couple” ankafuna kufotokoza mmene anasemphanirana ndi munthuyo koma mpata wochita zimenezi sunapezeke. Munthu uja anapitiriza kufotokoza nkhani yonse ya zimene zinachitika kuchokera m'mawa ndipo kenako anamaliza ndi nkhani yongobwera kumene yochokera kuchipatala cha ku Nkisa yonena kuti Kaputeni Winterbottom akhoza osaona kutuluka kwa dzuwa la tsiku lotsatira.

Pa nthawi imeneyo m'pamene John Nwodika anatulukira.

“Komatu iwe sunali bwino mmawa wa lero, chachitika n'chiyani?” anafunsa Couple.

“Nkhani imene ndabwerera kuno ndi yomweyo. Matenda amene ndimadwala ine anali chenjezo lochokera kwa Mkulu Wansembe. Ndikungowombera kuphazi kuti ndinamvera chenjezo limenelo, apo bii tikanakhala tikukamba zina pano.” Kenako John anafotokoza kuti Mkulu Wansembeyo amadziwa kale zonse zokhudza kudwala kwa Winterbottom munthu aliyense asanamuuze.

“Ananena kuti chiyani?” anafunsa munthu m'modzi kapena awiri nthawi imodzi.

“Anati: ‘Ngati akudwala akhala bwino.’ Sindikudziwa kuti amatanthauza chiyani, koma ndimaona kuti

amanena zimenezi mosonyeza kuti akudziwapo kanthu.”

Poyamba “Couple” Matthew Nweke sankadera nkhawa kwambiri. Iye anali ndi mtetezi wake yemwe *dibia* wa kumudzi kwake anamupangira pamene ankapita kutchuthi ulendo wapita. Koma pamene ankamva zowonjezereka zokhudza Ezeulu, chikhulupiriro chake mwa mtera womwe anapangiridwawo chinayamba kusweka. Kenako ataona kuti madzi achita katondo, anauza mnzake anapita naye ku Umuaro uja kuti apite kukakumana ndi *dibia* wam’mudzimo kuti awonjezere chitetezo. Nthawi inali itadutsa 10 koloko usiku pamene ankakafika kwa munthu wodziwa zitsambayo. Anthu am’mudzi wonse ankamutchula kuti “Uta Wolasa Mlengalenga.”

Atangolowa m’nyumba mwa munthuyo, anawauziratu chimene anapitira. “Mwachita bwino kubwera mwa-changu chifukwa mumasewera ndi mkango. Mumaika mitu yanu mkamwa mwa ng’ona. Koma pano chinthu china choposa mkango komanso ng’ona chili pano. Chimenechi n’chifukwa chake ndikunena kuti mwalandiridwa kuno chifukwa mwafika kumalo achitetezo.” Iye anawauza kuti asadye chilichonse chimene atenga kucho-kera ku Umuaro. Anawauzanso kuti akatenge atambala awiri komanso ndalama zomwe anatenga ku Umuaro kuti adzazipereke nsembe. Ponena za zinthu zimene anali atadya komanso kumwa kale, anawapatsa mankhwala ena oti amwe komanso ena oti akatsire m’madzi osamba.

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Pamene ankadya *foofoo* ndi masamba owawasa aja, Obika ankangoyang'ana bambo ake ndi pakona pa diso lake ndipo anaona kuti chinachake chikuwavutitsa maganizo. Iye ankadziwa kuti angataye nthawi yake ngati atawafunsa kuti chikuwadetsa nkhawa n'chiyani pa nthawi imeneyi.

Ngakhale akakhala kuti wasangalala, Ezeulu sanali munthu woti n'kukufotokozera zimene akuganiza. Iye ankayankhula pa nthawi imene wafuna, osati pa nthawi imene wina wafuna.

Kenako Ezeulu anadzuka n'kuyenda molowera kukhomo landendeyo lomwe linali laling'ono moti munthu wonenepa sangakwanepo. Koma asanatuluke panja, anakumbukira kuti waiwala chinachake. Iye anapita pamene panali chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi n'kufufuzamo botolo lake lafodya wofwenkha. Atalipeza, anayendanso molowera kukakhomo kuja ndipo ulendo uno anatsanzika kuti akupita kukataya madzi.

Iye anali atatsimikiza mtima kuti kwa nthawi yonse yomwe atakhale ku Okperi sayang'ana mwezi watsopano. Koma diso ndi ladyera kwambiri ndipo limatha kuona zinthu zimene mwiniwake sakufuna kuziona. Choncho pamene Ezeulu ankakataya madzi panja, maso ake anangopezeka kuti ayamba kufufuza mwezi watsopano. Pamene maso akewo ankayendayenda mlengalenga, anaona kuti kumwamba kunali ndi nkhope yachilendo. Zinali

zosatheka kuti munthu aloze ndi chala chake pamene mweziwo ungatulukire. Zimenezi zinamuchititsa mantha kwambiri, koma atasinkhasinkha anaona kuti palibe chifukwa chodera nkawa. Kodi zikanatheka bwanji kuti kumwamba kwa nthaka ya Okperi kukhale kofanana ndi kumwamba kwa nthaka ya ku Umuaro? Iye ankaona kuti dziko lililonse lili ndi kumwamba kwakekwake. Choncho Ezeulu anamanga mfundo yakuti kumwamba kumene ankayang'anaku kunalibe chilichonse chodabwitsa malinga ndi kumaloko.

Usiku umenewo, Ezeulu analota amuna onse a mu Umuaro atachita chimsonkhano cha mundiponderamwana. Anthu omwe anayankhula nawo masiku apitawo ndi amene anali pamsonkhano umenewu. Koma m'malo moti Ezeulu ayankhule ndi athuwo, agogo ake ndi amene ankayankhula. Koma chodabwitsa n'choti anthuwo anakana kumvetsera: "Ameneyu asayankhule pano; akaimirira amangokhalira kuyankhula zamkutu." Mkulu Wansembeyo anakweza mawu ake n'kuwapempha kuti amumvetsere koma athuwo anaumitsa makosi awo. Iwo ankanena kuti atopa naye Mkulu Wansembeyo ndipo ankati akufuna kuzula chitedze chisanayange n'kuyamba kuwasowetsa mtendere. "N'chifukwa chiyani timadalira kapunthabuya ameneyu kuti atiuze nyengo yoyenera kubzala mbewu zathu?" anafunsa Nwaka. "Kodi pano pali munthu amene sangathe kuona mwezi watsopano ali kunyumba kwake? Komanso kodi mphamvu za Ulu zinapita kuti? Kodi sitinganene kuti zinatheratu ngati nsanza?"

"Sitingakane kuti m'mbuyomo anateteza makolo athu kwa asilikali a ku Abam, koma panopa mphamvu zake zatheratu moti sangakwanitse kutiteteza kwa mzungu. Tiye timuthamangitse monga mmene anzathu a ku Aninta anachitira ndi mulungu wawo wopanda pake.

Chimene anachita ndi choti anayamba ndi kuthamangitsa ansembe ake, kenako anatenga mulunguyo, yemwe anka-mutchula kuti Ogba, n’kukamukolezera chimoto n’kumubutsa. Anali atatopa ndi utambwali wa mulungu wawoyo. Eti m’malo moti aziwateteza kwa adani awo ankaphanso anthu ake! Akanadziwa sakanachita masewera amenewa ndi anthu ake ogangalamawo.” Mawu amenewa ali mkamwa, anthu omwe anali pamsonkhanowo anayamba kukankha Mkulu Wansembe uja. M’maloto momwemo Ezeulu anangozindikira kuti agogo akewo asanduka iyeyo ndipo anthuwo amukwiwira kwambiri n’kuyamba kumulavulira kumaso. Ena ankakuwa n’kumanena kuti Ezeulu ndi wansembe wa mulungu wakufa.

Ezeulu anadzidzimuka ndipo ankangooneka ngati wagwa mumtengo wautali kwambiri.

“Zili bwinobwino koma?” anafunsa Obika mumdima.

“Inde zili bwino. Ndimabwebweta eti?”

“Inde. Zikuoneka kuti mumalimbana ndi munthu winawake n’kumanena kuti muona amene ataponde mnzake pamimba.”

“Koma maloto amenewa bwanji? Mwinatu akuchititsa ndi akangaude ali kudengawa.”

Pamene ankanena zimenezi anali atakhala tsonga pamkeka uja. Iye sankakayikira kuti zimene anaonazo sanali maloto wamba, koma masomphenya. Iye ankatha kuona zonse bwinobwino moti zinkangokhala ngati zikuchitika masanasana. Kuwonjezera apo, agogo ake sankawakumbukira bwinobwino chifukwa anawaona ali kamwana. Koma pamene ankalota malotowa, agogo akewo anaonekeranso bwinobwino kwa nthawi yoyamba pamo-yo wake, ngakhale kuti chithunzithunzi cha mmene ankaonekera chinali chitafufutika m’mutu mwake.

Ezeulu anatulutsanso fodya wake uja ndipo anapaka pamphuno zake zonse n’kufwenkha n’cholinga choti fodyayo amuthandize kuganiza. Ndiye popeza Obika anali atafa nalonso tulo, anaona kuti akhala ndi mpata wabwino wosinkhasinkha za malotowo mozamirapo. M’mutu mwa-ke munayamba kubwera maganizo a ntchito yake yoyang’ana pakhomo la mwezi watsopano kuti aone ngati watuluka. Iye ankaona kuti ntchitoyi ndi yopanda tanthawuzo m’pang’ono pomwe. Pa nthawiyi, ngakhale kwawo kwa mayi ake komwe ankabwera kawirikawiri ali mwana, kunkakhala ngati kuchilendo. Iye anali atatenga nthawi yaitali zedi asanabwerenso kumudziwu ngakhale kuti sikunali kutali kwenikweni ndi ku Umuaro. Atango-sinkhuka, Ezeulu anayamba kuona kuti kwawo ndi ku Umuaro ndipo ankadziwa makona onse a Umuaro kuposa kwina kulikonse. Koma tsopano m’mudzi womwe ankautenga ngati kwawowo anali atayambanso kuonedwa ngati mlendo! Akaganizira zimenezi ankangoona ngati wagwiritsidwa mwala ndipo zinamuwawa kwambiri mumtima. Iye anali atasiya udindo wake monga Mkulu Wansembe kwa kanthawi ndipo izinso zinkamuzula pamoyo kwambiri. Koma pambuyo pokhala Mkulu Wansembe kwa zaka khumu zisanu ndi zitatu, ankamva kupepukidwa kukhala kwa kanthawi popanda udindo umenewu. Popeza anali kutali ndi Ulu, iye ankangodziona ngati kamwana komwe katsala kokhakokha, makolo ake atayenda ulendo wautali. Koma chisangalalo chake chinabwera pamene ankaganizira zimene angachite kuti akhaultitse adani ake, maganizo omwe anayamba pamene ankamvetsera zonena za Nwaka kumsika kuja.

Maganizo okhaultisa adani akewa anachita kuwabweretsa dala kuti amutonhoze. Pamapeto pake Ezeulu anayamba kumvako bwino ndipo anakwanitsa kuthama-

ngitsa maganizo a maloto onyansa aja. Ndiye tsopano popeza anaganiziranso za nkhanayi mwakuya, iye anama-nga mfundo imodzi. Kusamvana komwe kunalipo pakati pa iye ndi mzungu sikunali kathu akayerekeza ndi mavuto omwe ankafunika kuwakonza pakati pa fuko lake. Kwa zaka zambiri, iye anachenjeza anthu a mu Umuaro kuti asalole kuti anthu ochepa ansanje awasokoneze n'kuwalowetsa kutchire. Koma iwo ananyozera zimenezi n'kutsonyeza zala m'makutu kuti asamvenso zonena zake.

Iwo anapitirizabe kulowa kutchire phazi limodzi ndi limodzi mpaka anafika poti sangabwererenso. Zomwe anthu am'fukoli ankachita zinkangofanana ndi munthu amene amaba posolola zinthu za mwini n'kupezeka kuti wasolola zambiri moti mwini wakeyo sangalepherenso kudziwa. Akaganizira za kupotera kwa mtundu wake, ankaona kuti nkondo ikuyenera kumenyedwa tsopano. Iye ankayendera mwambi wakuti, pokhapokha munthu atalimbana ndi munthu amene amakonda kudutsa pakhomopake, ena onse amaganiza kuti pali nsewu. Ezeulu anakunga chibakera chake potsimikizira kuti akuyenera kumenya nkondo. Iye ankaona kuti zingakhale bwino mzungu atamusungabe, osati kwa tsiku limodzi lokha, koma kwa chaka chathunthu kuti mulungu wake ayambe kuwafunsa mafunso anthu a ku Umuaro.

Potsatira malangizo a Winterbottom oti Ezeulu akhaulitsidwe kuti aphunzire mwambo, Clarke anakana kuonana ndi Ezeulu m'mawa wa tsiku lotsatira, monga mmene mesenjala wake uja analonjezera. Anapitirizabe kuchita zimenezi mpaka masiku anayi anadutsa.

Pa tsiku lachiwiri mlungu womwewo, pamene Clarke ndi Wade ankanyamuka kumapita kuchipatala ku Nkisa pagalimoto yawo, anaona m'mbali mwansewu muli nsembe. Iwo sanaime kuti aone kuti nsembezo ndi za

chiyani. Koma atayenda pang'ono anaona nsembe ina yodabwitsa. Wade anaimitsa galimoto ndipo onse anatsika kuti akaone.

M'malo mwa kankhuku koyera komwe ambiri ankapereka nsembe, ulendo uno panali atambala awiri akuluakulu. Zinthu zina zomwe zinali pamalowo zinali zanthawi zonse; panali khwaule lanthete la masamba a kunsonga a gwalangwa, mphika womwe munali mtedza uwiri wa kola ndiponso choko choyera.

Komabe, zinthu zimenezi anazona kumapeto. Chinthu choyamba chimene chinakola chidwi cha maso awo chinali ndalama yachizungu.

"Nsembe yangati imeneyi sindinayambe ndaionapo chibwerere kuno!" anatero Wade.

"Komadi, nanenso zimenezi ndi zachilendo. Koma kodi apereka nsembe imeneyi chifukwa chiyani?"

"Mwina munthu wina wofunika wadwala kwambiri. N'kutheka ndi nduna ya mfumu ndiye yapereka nsembeyi kuti ichire nsanga," anatero Wade chapansipansi. Koma kenako anakhala ngati wamva mawu muntima mwake moti analola kuti mawuwo atulukire pakamwa pake mwamphamvu.

"Mmene nsembeyi ikuonekera siikundisangalatsa, sindikanadabwa akanagwiritsa ntchito ndalama zawo za ngwere kapena ndalama zina. Koma taona ndalama aikayi. Aika bwanji ndalama ya nkhope ya Mfumu George pa-nsembe yawoyi!"

Atamva zimenezi, Clarke anafa nalo phwete. Koma sanaseke kwa nthawi yaitali chifukwa anaona Wade akutola ndalamayo mumphika momwe inali n'kuipukuta ndi masamba kenako anaipukutira pabuluku lake n'kuiponya m'thumba.

"N'chifukwa chiyani ukutenga ndalamayo? Uku-

funa utani nayo?”

“Sindingalole kuti Mfumu ya ku England ikhale limodzi ndi nsembe zonyansa ngati zimenezi,” anayankha Wade akuseka.

Zimene Wade anachitazi sizinamusangalatse Clarke. Poyamba iye ankasirira kwambiri anthu ngati Wade ndi Wright, omwe ankaoneka kuti akugwira ntchito yofunika popanda kukhwimitsa zinthu. Koma ataona zimene zinachitikazi, anasintha maganizo. Iye ankaona kuti zimene Wade anachitazo ndi kudzikonda komanso kupanda chilungamo kwenikweni. Ankaona kuti ndi kulakwa kuwononga nsembe ya munthu wina, kokha chifukwa choti umakonda kwambiri dziko lako. Akayerekezera khalidwe lodzikondali ndi kukhwimitsa zinthu, (kuphatikizaponso kamoyo kodzimva komwe ambiri ankakhala nako) ankaona kuti bolanso kukhala wofanana ndi Winterbottom.

Kenako anayamba kuganizira zomwe zingachitike ngati Winterbottom, yemwe ankateteza anthu am'mudzi, amwalira. Iye anayamba kuona kuti ngati zimenezi zitachitikadi, ndiye kuti udindo woteteza anthuwo kuchokera kwa anthu ankhanza ngati Wade udzagwera m'manja mwake.

M'mawa wa tsiku lomwelo Ezeulu anatumiza Obika ku Umuaro kuti akauze banja lake mmene zinthu zikuyendera komanso kuti akauze mkazi wake wang'ono kuti apite ku Okperi n'cholinga choti azikamuphikira.

Koma munthu wakumudzi kwawo uja, John Nwodika, sanagwirizane ndi ganizoli.

“Iyayi musatero,” iye anatero. “Mkazi wanga ndi mwana wabwenzi lanu lakalekale ndipo mkazi wangayo

sangalole kuti muchite kufika poitanitsa mzimayi kumudzi kuti abwere kumadzakuphikirani. Tikudziwa kuti sitingakwanitse kukupatsani chakudya chimene munkadya kwanu. Koma ngati tili ndi mtedza uwiri woti tidye, tizikupatsani umodzi ndi kapu ya madzi oti mumwere.”

Ezeulu sankapitiriza kukana munthu akayankhula mawu ngati amenewa. Ngakhale zikanakhala kuti iyeyo sakhulupirira m’pang’ono pomwe ndi mwana wa Nwodika, iye sakananyoza mwana wa bwenzi lake, Egonwanne, yemwe pofika nthawi yokolola yotsatira akanakhala kuti watha zaka zitatu zathunthu ali pansi pa nthaka. Choncho anauza Obika kuti asakauze Ugoye kuti abwere. Anangomuza kuti akamakabwera akatenge zilazi komanso zakudya zina kuti amupeputseko mwana wa Nwodika.

Ezeulu anali ndi zifukwa zokwanira zokwiwira mwana wa Nwodika. Choyamba, iye ankachokera m’mudzi wa ku Umuaro womwe kunkachokera anthu omwe ankafuna azimuthokosola dala. Chachiwiri, ntchito yomwe Nwodika ankagwira inali yonyazitsa Umuaro chifukwa ankagwira ntchito m’nyumba mwa mzungu n’kumaseteka mbale zake kukhitchini. Komanso kuwonjezera pamene-po, ndi iyeyu amene anaperekeza mesenjala uja kunyumba kwake. Koma pamene tsiku loyamba linkatha, mtima wake unayamba kufewa ndipo anayamba kuona kuti mwana wa Nwodika ndi munthu wabwino. Zimenezi zinamukumbutsa kuti ngakhale mdani wako amatha kusanduka m’bale wako ukakhala kudziko lachilendo. Kunena zoon, kubomaku kunali dziko lina kwa Ezeulu. Okperi wamasiku amenewa sanali wofanana ndi amene anamuona m’masiku a ubwana wake, pamene ankabwera kumudzi wa mayi ake, Nwanyieke. Panali malo ena omwe ankaoonekabe ngati kale, koma Ezeulu sakananyamuka n’kupita kumafufuza malo amenewo chifukwa cha mmene zinthu

zinaliri. Koma kodi akananyamukadi bwenzi atakapeza malo komanso nkhope zomwe ankazidziwa zikuonekabe mmene zinaliri? Mwamwayi, maganizo amenewa anamuwombola chifukwa anachititsa kuti asanyamuke n’kuchita kuuzidwa kuti iyeyo ndi mkaidi yemwe sangapite kuli-konse kumene akufuna.

Pamene ankadya chakudya madzulo umenewo, Ezeulu anamva ana akuimba mochingamira mwezi watsopano. *“Onwa atu-o-o-o! Onwa atu-o-o-o!”* mawu a anawo anamveka kuchokera mbali zonse za nyumba zapabomapo. Koma makutu akuthwa a Ezeulu anagwira mawu a ana ena owerengeka omwe ankaimba m’chinenero chachilendo. Kupatulapo mawu akuti mwezi, Ezeulu sankamva zina zonse zimene anawo ankanena. N’kutheka kuti anali ana a anthu ena omwe ankayankhula chiIbo chosadziwika kudzera mumphuno zawo.

Ulendo woyamba umene Ezeulu anamva mawu a anawo mtima wake unanyamuka. Ngakhale ankayembekezera zimenezi, pamene zinkachitika anali asanakonzekke. Iye anali ataiwalako za nkhani ya kutuluka kwa mwezi watsopanawu. Koma tsopano maganizowa anabweranso m’mutu mwake. Inde, mulungu wake ayenera ankafunsa kuti: “Kodi Ezeulu ali kuti?” ndipo anthu a ku Umuaro ankayenera kumuyankha.

Pa tsiku loyamba ndi lachiwiri chichokereni Ezeulu kupita ku Okperi, anthu apakhomo pake anali ndi nkhwawa yaikulu. Ngakhale kuti nyengoyi inali yobzala mbewu, palibe amene anapita kumunda.

Mkazi wa Obika, Okuata, anachoka kukhumbi lake komwe ankasowa wocheza naye n’kupita kwa apongozi ake. Edogo anachoka kunyumba kwake n’kupita kukakhala m’khumbi mwa bambo ake. Aliyense maso anali kunjira, kudikira kumva kuti kunja kulinji. Anthu oyandi-

kana nawo nyumba komanso odutsa ankakhotea kunyumbaku n'kumafunsa kuti: “Kodi sanabwerebe?” Pamene nthawi inkadutsa, funsoli linayamba kumupsetsa mtima Edogo. Zinkamunyansa kwambiri makamaka akamamva funsoli likuchokera kwa anthu omwe cholinga chawo chinali kudzatapa mabodza kuti akawakhuthule kwina.

Chakumasana kwa tsiku lachiwiri, Obika anatulukira. Poyamba, palibe amene analimba mtima kumufunsa kuti chachitika n'chiyani. Azimayi ena anangotsala pang'ono kuyamba kugwetsa misozi. Ngakhale kuti pakhomopa panali teketeke ndi mantha komanso nkhwapa pamene Obika ankafika, Obika sanakwanitse kubisa nkhwapa imene inali pachipumi chake. Nkhope yake inali itagweratu pamene ankafika pakhomopa ndipo anangofikira kukhala panso mongodziponya akuoneka ngati wayenda chothamanga njira yonse kuchokera ku Okperi. Iye anaitanitsa madzi ozizira omwe mchemwali wake anamubweretsera. Atamaliza kupha ludzu lake, anaika chikho panso ndipo Edogo anamufunsa funso.

“Kodi munthu amene unapita naye limodzi uja ali kuti?” iye anafunsa motero, akukhala ngati akuzemba kutchula dzina chifukwa cha mantha. Ngakhale Obika sakanachita njerengo pa nthawi imeneyo.

Iye anakhala kaye phee kenako n'kunena kuti: “Anali ali bwino pamene ndimasiyana nawo.”

Mantha omwe anali pankhope za anthu aja anawonjezeka.

“Ndiye mzunguyo amawaitanirani?”

“Munawasiya ali malo otani?”

“Nanga abwera liti kunyumba kuno?”

“Inetu ndili ndi kamwa limodzi. Mukuganiza kuti ndiyankha bwanji nthawi imodzi mafunso onsewo?” Obika anatero pofuna kuthamangitsa nkhwapa yomwe inadza-

za pakhomopo, koma analephera. “Pamene ndimasiyana nawo m’wawa walero, mzunguyo anali asananenebe chulichonse. Sitinakumane naye chifukwa anthu amati akudwala mwakayakaya moti moyo akungoonera pakhosi.” Nkhani imeneyi inachititsa kuti pakhomopo patekeseke.

Ngakhale kuti anthu ankanena zosiyanasiyana zokhudza azungu, zinali zisanamvekepo kuti azungu amadwala ngati anthu akuda.

“Inde, akudwala mwakayakaya. Zikuoneka kuti ali ndi mchimwene wake yemwe wamupatsira uthenga woti auze Ezeulu. Koma nayenso wasokonezeka ndi kudwala kwa mchimwene wakeyo moti anaiwaliratu kubwera kudzationa. Choncho Ezeulu anandiuza kuti: *Iweyo bwerrera kaye kunyumba chifukwa anthu akhoza kuyamba kuganiza kuti chinachake chatichitikirira*. N’chifukwa chake ndatulukira.”

“Ndiye ndi ndani amene akumupatsa chakudya?” anafunsa Ugoye.

“Mwamukumbukira mwana wa Nwodika, yemwe anabwera limodzi ndi mesenjala wa mzungu uja?” anafunsa Obika, mokhala ngati akuyankhula ndi amuna omwe anali pamalopo osati ndi Ugoye. “Zinadziwika kuti mkazi wake ndi mwana wa bwenzi la bambo yemwe ankakhala ku Umuagu. Iye wakhala akutiphikira kungochokera dzulo ndipo ananena kuti pa nthawi yonse imene atakhale moyo, Ezeulu saitaniitsa mkazi wake kuti azikamuphikira.”

“Ndifunse nawo, mwina ndakumva molakwa,” anatero Akuebue yemwe anali atangoyankhula pang’ono kwambiri. “Wanena kuti mkazi wa munthu wa ku Umu-neora ndi amene akuphikira Ezeulu?”

“Ndi momwemo ndithu.”

“Chonde usandiuzenso zimenezo. Edogo, konzeka,

tiye tipite ku Okperi pompano.”

“Komatu Ezeulu si mwana,” anatero Anosi, yemwe ankakhala nyumba yapafupi. “Iye uja sangafunike kuchita kumuphunzitsa anthu amene ayenera kudya chakudya chawo.”

“Wamva zimene ndanena Edogo? Ndati konzeka. Ine ndikupita kunyumba kuti ndikatenge zina ndi zina.”

“Ineyo sindikufuna kukuletsani kupita ku Okperi,” anatero Obika, “koma musayankhule ngati ndinu nokha amene muli ndi nzeru. Sikuti Ezeulu ndi ine tinangotsegula pakamwa pathu titatsinzina n’kuyamba kudya chakudyacho. Usiku wa dzulo Ezeulu anakana kudya chakudya ngakhale mwana wa Nwodika analawa kuti titsimikizire kuti sanatsiremo chiphe. Koma pofika m’ mawa walero, Ezeulu waona umboni wokwanira wosonyeza kuti munthuyo sakumusungira kampeni kumphasa komanso alibe cholinga chilichonse chaupandu.”

Akuebue sanakhutire ndi chilichonse chimene Obika ananena.

Iye ankadziwa zochuluka kwambiri zokhudza anthu a ku Umunneora. Kwa amene ankanena kuti Ezeulu si mwana, sanaone mkwiyo womwe unasonkhana muntima mwake chifukwa cha zimene ananenazo. Akuebue ankadziwa bwino Ezeulu kuposa ana komanso akazi ake. Iye ankadziwa kuti sizingakhale zachilendo Ezeulu kuganiza kuti akafere kutali n’cholinga chofuna kukhaulitsa adani ake. Zinali zotheka kuti manja a mwana wa Nwodika ndi oyeradi, komabe iye ankafuna kutsimikizira zinthu zonse, paja amati zakumva kupweteketsa mutu. Iye analibe nazo ntchito kuti ena akhumudwa akachita zimenezi. Nanga ndi ndani amene angameze makhololo pofuna kupewa kukhumudwitsa ena? Nanjinanji kumeza chiphe pongofuna kuti ena asakhumudwe!

Anosi yemwe ankakhala pafupi ndi nyumba ya Ezeulu, ataona kuti zonena zake sizinamvedwe, anango-khala kaye chete. Koma kenako anayankhulanso ndipo ulendo uno anali ndi maganizo osiyana ndi oyamba aja.

“Ndikuganiza kuti Akuebue akunena zoona. Musiyeni apite ndi Edogo kuti akatsimikizire ngati ali bwinodi. Koma akamapita atengenso Ugoye, yemwe atenge zilazi ndi zinthu zina zofunika. Mukapita choncho ulendo wanuyo sukakhumudwitsa aliyense.”

“Koma kodi n’chifukwa chiyani mukuopa kukhumudwitsa anthu?” anafunsa Akuebue. “Ineyo si mwana. Ndimadziwa mmene ndingachekere popanda kutulutsa magazi. Koma sindingaope kukhumudwitsa munthu wa ku Umunneora ngati moyo wa Ezeulu uli pachiswe.”

“Zoona,” anavomereza Anosi. “Zimene mwanenazo ndi zoona zenizeni. Bambo anga ankakonda kundiuza kuti kuopa kukhumudwitsa ena n’kumene kumachititsa munthu kumeza chiphe. Umati kulowa m’nyumba mwa munthu woipa mtima, munthuyo n’kukubweretsera kola. Wekha umadziwiratu kuti mmene wabweretsera kolayo ali ndi zolinga zoipa ndipo mtima wako umakuuza kuti usadye. Koma chifukwa choopa kukhumudwitsa anthu, umatha kumeza *ukwalanta*. Ine ndikugwirizana ndi Akuebue.”

N’kutheka kuti palibe amene anamusowa kwambiri Ezeulu kuposa Nwafo. Ndiye mwatsoka, mayi akenso anali oti apita nawo paulendowu. Komabe vutoli linafewerapo atamva zoti Edogo nayenso apita nawo.

Kuchoka kwa Ezeulu kunachititsa kuti Edogo apeze mpata wokhaulitsa mwana yemwe munthu wachikulireyo

ankamulelera pachilolo. Monga mwana woyamba, Edogo anasamuka m'nyumba yake n'kukalowa ya bambo ake n'kumadikirira kuti abwere. Nwafo yemwe ankakonda kukhala m'nkumbimo anayamba kuona kuti diso la m'chimwene wakeyo silinkafuna kuti iyeyo akhalemo. Ngakhale anali mwana wamng'ono, Nwafo anali ndi maganizo a munthu wamkulu. Iye ankatha kudziwa ngati munthu akumuyang'ana ndi diso labwino kapena ayi. Ngakhale zikanakhala kuti Edogo sananene chilichonse, Nwafo akanadziwabe kuti sakufunidwa m'nyumbamo. Mwadzulo lake, Edogo anamuza kuti apite kukhumbi la mayi ake. Anati asamangokhala ndungundu mu *obimo* n'kumayang'ana kukamwa kwa anthu akuluakulu. Atamva chipongwe chimenechi, Nwafo anatulukadi panja n'kukayamba kulira. Koyamba pamoyo wake, Nwafo ana-zidwa kuti sakufunidwa m'nyumba ya bambo ake.

Kwa tsiku lonse lalero, Nwafo sanalowenso mu *obiyo* kufikira pamene Obika anafika. Pa nthawiyi, ali-yense kuphatikizapo anthu a nyumba zoyandikira ana-bwera kudzamva kuti chachitika n'chiyani. Iye anakhala pamene ankakonda kukhala mopanda kuopa chilichonse. Nayenso Edogo sananene chilichonse ndipo ankaoneka-nso kuti sanaone komwe kuti Nwafoyo alipo.

Mchemweli wa Nwafo, Obiageli analira mpaka maso kutupa pamene mayi ake ndi anthu ena ankauyamba wopita ku Okperi. Iye sanatonthole ngakhale Oduche anamuza kuti akamutolera *icheku* ndi *udala*. Pamapeto pake Obika anamuopseza kuti akapitiriza kulira akamuitanira chinyawu chotchedwa *ichele*. Atangomva zimenezoz, Obiageli anathonthola nthawi yomweyo. Kenako anakhala pangodya ina ya *obiyo* n'kuyamba kufwenthera kwinaku akusisima.

Pamene dzuwa linkalowa m'zikope mwake, Nwafo

anayambanso kuvutika maganizo ndi nkhani imene anakhala akuiganizira kuchokera dzulo. Kodi n'chiyani chin kayenera kuchitika mwezi watsopano ukaoneka? Iye ankadziwa kuti bambo ake ankauyembekezera kwambiri asanapite ku Okperi. Kodi mweziwo ukanawatsatira ku Okperi komweko kapena ukanawadikirira mpaka atabwera? Ngati mweziwo ukanaonekera ali ku Okperi, kodi Ezeulu akanaulandira bwanji popanda chinganga chomwe ankaimba pouchingamira? Nwafo anayang'ana *ogene* yemwe anali pafupi ndi khoma komanso mtengo umene ankaimbira *ogoneyo*. Iye anaona kuti njira yabwino kwambiri ndi yoti mweziwo uwadikire mpaka atabwera. Komabe pamene mdima unkayamba, Nwafo anapita kukakhala pamene bambo ake ankakhala akamadikira kutuluka kwa mwezi watsopano. Iye sanadikire kwa nthawi yaitali kufikira pamene anaona mwezi waung'ono kwambiri utatuluka. Mweziwo unkaoneka wowonda kwambiri komanso unkangokhala ngati sukufuna kutuluka. Nwafo anatenga *ogene* ndipo ankafuna kuyamba kumugogoda, koma manja ake anauma chifukwa cha mantha.

Ezeulu anali akumvabe m'maganizo mwake kuimba kwa ana a kunyumba zabomako pamene mwana wa Nwodika ndi mkazi wake anatulukira atanyamula chakudya chamadzulo. Monga ankachitira nthawi zonse, mwana wa Nwodika anatema nthongo ya *fofoo* n'kusunsa muniwo kenako n'kudya. Atangotero, Ezeulu anayamba kuchichita kanthu chakudyacho. Ngakhale sankadya *egusi*, patsikuli anadya mopanda matama chifukwa *egusiyo* anakonzedwa bwino kwambiri. Iye sanazindikire nkomwe kuti ndi chakudya ankadana nacho chija. Nsomba komanso nsuzi

wa *egusiyo* zinali za *asa* kapena zina zabwino kwambiri. Nsombazo zinali zofutsa ndi utsi ndipo zinkakoma ngati nyama. Nayenso *foofoo* anaphikidwa mwaukadaulo zedi moti analibe mtchimtchi ndi imodzi yomwe. Zinali zoonekeratu kuti chinangwa chomwe anaphikira *foofoooyo* chinali chitasakanizidwa ndi nthonchi zaziwisi.

Ali mkatikati modya chakudyachi, mwana wake, mkazi wake komanso mnzake uja anatulukira. Munthu amene anawalozero kumene kunali Ezeulu anali mesenjala yemwe ankayang'anira akaidi omwe atsekeredwa m'nde-nde. Poyamba Ezeulu ankachita mantha kuti mwina china-chake chachitika kunyumba. Koma ataona zilazi zomwe mkazi wake anasenza, mtima wake unakhala m'malo.

"N'chifukwa chiyani simunadikire kuti mubwere mawa m'mawa?"

"Tabwera madzulo ano chifukwa timakaikira kuti mwina mukhala mukubwerera kunyumba m'mawawo," anayankha Akuebue.

"Kunyumba?" Ezeulu anaseka. Kumeneko kunali kuseka kwa anthu omwe samatha kulira. "Ndi ndani wakuuzani zoti ndikupita kunyumba? Inetu sindinaonanebe ndi mzungu yemwe ananena kuti ndibwere kuno. Anthu andiuza kuti mzunguyo akudwala mwakayakaya. N'ku-theka kuti akufuna kuti Mkulu Wansembe adzaperekedwe nsembe ngati mtsamiro pamaliro ake."

"Usayankhulenso zimenezo!" anatero Akuebue, ndipo ena ajanso anagwirizana naye.

"Kodi panopa tili ku Umuaro ngati?" anafunsa Ezeulu.

"Ngati munthuyo akudwala ndipo sanasiye uthenga uliwonse woti akuuzeni, mungachite bwino kubwerera kaye kuti mudzabwerenso akadzachira," anatero Edogo, yemwe ankaona kuti malo analiwo si abwino oti bambo

akewo ndi anzawowo azimenya nkondo ya mawu.

“Kunoko sindikufunanso kudwabwera ulendo wachiwiri. Ndikhalabe kuno mpaka nditaona mutu komanso mchira wa nkhani imene ndabwerera kuno.”

“Kodi mukudziwa kuti akhala akudwala kwa nthawi yaitali bwanji? Mukhozatu kukhala kuno . . .”

“Ngakhale atadwala mpaka chaka kutha, ndikhalabe kuno n’kumamudikirira . . . Izi zili apo, Ugoye, anthu ali bwanji kunyumba?”

“Tinawasiya ali bwino.” Khosi lake linali likuoneka ngati lalowa mkati chifukwa chosenza katundu wolembera uja.

“Nanga ana, mkazi wa Obika komanso ena onse?”

“Onse tawasiya ali bwino.”

“Nanga inu kunyumba kwanu kuli bwanji?” Ezeulu anafunsa Akuebue.

“Pamene ndimachoka samalongolola. Komanso palibe amene amadwala, njala yokha basi.”

“Imeneyo ndi nkhani yaing’ono,” anatero mwana wa Nwodika. “Njala ndi yabwinoko tikayerekezera ndi matenda.” Pamene ankanena zimenezi mphuno zake zinali zikumulemera moti anatuluka panja n’kukamina mwamphamvu kuti mphunozo zitseguke. Kenako analowanso akuzipukuta ndi kuseri kwa dzanja.

“Nwego, ukhoza kumapita kunyumba kuti ukawakonzere anthuwa chakudya. Mbalezi ndibweretsa.”

Nwego anasenza katundu anabwera ndi Ugoye uja ndipo azimayi awiriwa anapita kukakonzika chakudya. Panalibe nthawi yoseweretsa moti azimayiwo atangocho ka Akuebue anayankhula.

“Obika watifotokozera mmene mwana wa Nwodika ndi mkazi wake wakhala akukusamalirirani.”

“Nokhanso mwaona ndi maso anu.” Ezeulu Anaya-

nkha mkamwa mwake mutadzaza *foofoo*.

“Zikomo kwambiri,” anatero Akuebue kwa John Nwodika.

“Tathokoza kwambiri chifukwa cha ntchito imene mwaigwira, muzigona pafupi ndi moto malinga ndi kuziziraku,” anateronso Edogo.

“Tangochita zimene timayenera kuchita basi. Kodi munthu wosauka ndi mkazi wake angachitenso zotani kuposa pamenepa? Tikudziwa kuti Ezeulu ali ndi nyama komanso nsomba kunyumba kwake, koma pamene ali kuno tinaona kuti tingachite bwino kugawana naye koche-pa kamene tili nako. Tangochita zimene timayenera kuchita basi.”

“Pamene Obika anatiuza zimenezi ndinanena kuti palibe chinthu chomwe chimasintha anthu kuposa kupita kudziko lakutali.”

“Zoonu,” anatero Ezeulu. “Tonde wamng’ono ananena kuti ulendo wopita kwawo kwa mayi ake unamuphunzitsa kuti asamathe mawu poyankhula.” Iye anadziseka yekha. “Ndikuona kuti ndikanachita bwino kwambiri ndikanamabwerabwera kwa mayi anga kuno.”

“Zimenezi zachititsadi kuti musinthe kwambiri, ngakhale nkhope yanuyi ikusonyeza zimenezo,” anatero Akuebue. “Pamene amandiuza kuti munthu wa ku Umu-neora akukusamalirani ndinawauza kuti akundinamiza. Kodi ndikanakhulupirira bwanji zimenezi ndikuona nkho-ndo imene tikumenyana kumudzi kuja?”

“Zimenezo ndi zimenedi mumachita kumudziko,” anatero mwana wa Nwodika. “Ine sindimatenga mkwiyo wakumudzi n’kubwera nawo koyenda kuno. Makolo athu anati ukakhala koyenda, munthu amene wayandikana naye ndiye m’bale wako. Mawu amenewa ndi amene ndi-mayendera pa moyo wanga.”

“Zoonadi,” anatero Akuebue akuoneka kuti akuganizira poti alowere kuti anene nkhani imene anabwerera. Atakhala chete kwa kanthawi, anaganiza zobandula chipika ndi nkhwangwa ngati mmene anthu a ku Nsugbe ankachitira akamakhapa dzungu. “Tabwera kuno ndi zolinga ziwiri. Tabwera ndi Ugoye kuti adzapeputse mkazi wa Nwodika pa udindo waukulu umene wausenza komanso kuti tidzathokoze mwana wa Nwodika. Tikufuna kumuuza kuti ngakhale kuti anthu am’mudzi wawkawo ali paudani wosamwerana madzi ndi mudzi wa kwa Ezeulu, lero asonyeza kuti ndi anansi a Ezeulu ndi banja lake.” Pamene ankayankhula zimenezi, dzanja la Akuebue linali lili m’thumba lake lachikopa chambudzi akufufuza lumu lake komanso kola. Kenako panachitika mwambo wapadera. Nwodika ndi Edogo anayambapo kumanga mfundo yosonyeza mgwirizano pakati pawo. Ezeulu ndi Akuebue ankangoonerera pamene achinyamata awiriwa ankadya kola wopakidwa magazi a wina ndi mnzake.

“Kodi zinakhala bwanji kuti uyambe kugwira ntchito kwa mzungu?” anafunsa Akuebue atayambiranso kuyankhulana.

Mwana wa Nwodika anatsokomola, kenako anati:

“Mwafunsa kuti zinatheka bwanji kuti ndiyambe kugwira ntchito kwa mzungu? Ndikhoza kunena kuti *chi* wanga (mulungu wanga waumwini) ndi amene anakonza zoti zimenezi zichitike. Ine sindinkadziwa chilichonse chokhudza mzunguyo. Sindinkadziwa chinenero komanso chikhalidwe chake. Ikamafika nyengo yachilimwe chaka chikubwerachi, ndikhala nditatha zaka zitatu ndikumugwirira ntchito. Tsiku lina zinangochitika kuti ine ndi anzanga ena tinachoka ku Umunneora kubwera ku Okperi kuti tidzaphunzire gule watsopano monga tinkachitira kwa zaka zambiri m’nyengo yamasika, tikangomaliza kuko-

lola. Chomwe chinandidabwitsa n'choti mnzanga wina dzina lake Ekemezie, yemwe ndikabwera kuno ndinkakagona kwawo, yemwenso akabwera ku Umuaro ankadzagona kwathu, ndinapeza kuti sanali pakati pa ovina gule a ku Okperi. Ndinamufufuza pagulu la anthu omwe anabwera kudzatichingamira koma sindinamupeze. Mnzanga wina dzina lake Ofodile anandiperekeza kunyumba kwake ndipo munthu ameneyu ndi amene anandiuza kuti Ekemezie anayamba kugwira ntchito kwa mzungu. Ndi zovuta kufotokoza mmene ndinamvera nditamva uthenga umenewu. Mwina ndinganene kuti ndinkangomva ngati wina wandiuza uthenga woti mnzangayo wamwalira. Ndinayesa kufunsa Ofodile kuti andifotokozere zambiri zokhudza mzungu yemwe ankamugwirira ntchitoyo ndipo anakhaladi nane pansi n'kundiylira zonse. Ndiye tsiku lotsatira, Ekemezie anabwera kudzakumana nane ndipo ananditenga n'kupita nane ku *Gorment heel* (kunyumba zaboma). Iye anandiitana ndi dzina langa ndipo ine ndinayankha. Anandiuza kuti chilichonse ndi chabwino panyengo yake—kuvina kumakoma m'nyengo yovina. Koma anandiuzenso kuti munthu wanzeru zake samapita pakatchire kukasaka mbewa anzake akupha nyama zikuluzikulu. Iye anandilangiza kuti ndisiye kuvina gule n'kulowa mumpikisano wothamangitsa makobidi a azungu. Ekemezie anandiitana kuti Nwabueze ndipo ine ndinavomera atanditchula dzina langali. Iye ankanena kuti mpikisano wothamangitsa ndalama za azungu sukudikira munthu ndipo sungayembekezere ineyo kuti ndiganize kaye. Anaphanso mwambi wake kuti ngati kalulu akulephera kuthamanga, ayenera kupereka mpata kwa fulu kuti adutse. Iye sanandibisire kuti anthu ochokera m'mafuko ang'onoang'ono omwe poyamba tinkawanyoza, anali atayamba kale kukondedwa ndi azungu pomwe anthu akwa-

thu anali adakali mtulo tofa nato. Iye anati athuwa akufunika kudzuka kutulo tawo, apo bii apitirizabe kuvala nkhwende anzawo akukokera mabuluku.”

Amuna atatuwo ankangomvetsera. Akuebue sananene chilichonse. Iye ankangoliza athotholi ndi zala zake ndipo chamumtima ankangoti: “Ndamvetsa chifukwa chake Ezeulu wayamba kugwirizana ndi munthu ameneyu. Zawo ndi zimodzi.” Ngakhale Akuebue ankamuganizira izi, aka kanali koyamba kuti nayenso Ezeulu amve maganizo a Nwodika pa nkhani ya azungu ndipo nkhope yake inawala ndi chisangalalo.

Komabe iye anayesetsa kubisa chimwemwe chime-nechi ndipo sankafuna kuoneka kuti akugwirizana ndi Nwodika kapena ayi. Ndi anthu enawo omwe ankafuna atadziwa zimenezi.

“Ndithu abale anga,” anapitiriza mwana wa Nwodika, “mmenemo ndi mmene m’bale mwanu anayambira kugwira ntchito kwa mzungu. Poyamba anandiuza kuti ndizimukonzera maluwa, koma patatha chaka chimodzi anandiitana n’kundiuzo kuti wandikweza pa ntchito ndipo ndiyamba kugwira yam’nyumba. Anandifunsa kuti dzina langa ndi ndani ndipo ine ndinamuuza kuti ndine Nwabueze. Koma chifukwa choti ankalephera kutchula dzinali, ananena kuti azingondiitana kuti Johnu.” Nwodika ananena zimenezi akumwetulira, koma sanamwetulire kwa nthawi yaitali. “Ndikudziwa kuti anthu ena kumudzi akumafalitsa mphekesera zoti ndimaphikira mzungu. Koma zimenezo ndi zabodza chifukwa ine sindimalowa ndi kukhitchini kwake komwe. Ntchito yanga ndi kungomukonzera m’nyumba basi. Mukudziwanso kuti mzungu sali ngati anthu akudafe. Ngati waika mbale apa, akhoza kukhumudwa kwambiri ngati ataipeza utaiika pamalo ena. Choncho ndimazungulira m’nyumba monse n’kumaone-

tsetsa kuti chilichonse chili pamalo pake. Koma ndikufuna kukuuzani kuti ine sindimafuna kudzafa ndili wamtchito wamzungu. Cholinga changa ndi kuyamba malonda a fodya ndikatolera kampamba. Anthu am'madera ambiri akumatola chikwama chifukwa cha malonda amenewa komanso malonda ogulitsa zovala. Anthu a ku Elumelu, Aninta, Umuofia komanso ku Mbaino ndi amene akutso-gola pa misika yatsopanoyi. Anthu amenewa ndi amene akumadzazitsa katundu wawo m'misikayi. Koma muta-ndifunsa kuti: Kodi pali munthu aliyense wochokera ku Umuaro yemwe ali m'gulu la akhumucha a kuno? Ndinga-kuyankheni kuti palibe ngakhale m'modzi. Nthawi zina ndimachita manyazi anthu akandifunsa kuti kumudzi kwathu ndi kuti. Ifeyo sitigulitsa nawo zinthu mumsika watsopanowu komanso sitifuna kugwira ntchito kwa azu-ngu. Sitifuna kuchita nawo chilichonse. Chimenecho n'chifukwa chake ndinasangalala pamene tsiku lina mzu-ngu anandiitana n'kundiiza kuti kumudzi kwathu kuli munthu wina wanzeru dzina lake Ezeulu. Ndinamuuza kuti alipodi. Anandifunsa ngati adakali moyo ndipo ndina-muuza kuti adakali gwagwagwa. Kenako anandiiza kuti: *Pita ndi mesenjala ukamuuze kuti ndikufuna kudzamu-funsa mafunso angapo okhudza chikhalidwe cha anthu ake chifukwa ndikudziwa ndi munthu wozindikira.* Ndita-mva zimenezi ndinadziiza kuti: Umenewu ndi mwayi woti fuko lathu lidziwike kwa mzunguyu. Sindinkadziwa kuti zinthu zingafike pamenepa.” Iye anaweramitsa mutu wake ndipo anayang'ana panso ali ndi chisoni chachikulu.

“Limeneli si vuto lako,” anatero Akuebue.

“Zinthu zina zimangochitika. Nthawi zina maso athu amatha kuona mbalame, ndipo ife timatola mwala kuti tiigende. Koma m'malo moilasa mwamaluli timape-zeka kuti taphonya n'kuchotsa diso la mnzathu.”

“Komabe ineyo ndimaona kuti ndinalakwitsa,” anatero mwana wa Nwodika modandaula kwambiri.

“Iweyo ndi amene uli wokayikitsa,” anatero Ezeulu. Anthu ena aja anali atapita kukagona kunyumba kwa mwana wa Nwodika ndipo anasiya Akuebue ndi Ezeulu m’chipinda chija.

“Ndimakhalabe ndi munthu amene akumwalira ngakhale *chi* wake atatsimikiza kuti apite.”

“Komatu munthu uyuyu sanganditsirire chiphe ngakhale ali wochokera ku Umunneora.”

“Zimenezo sitingadziwe,” anatero Akuebue akupukusa mutu wake. “Buluzi aliyense amabisa mimba yake moti sitingathe kudziwa ngati mimba ya buluzi uyuyu ili bwinobwino. Komansotu paja amati mtima wa mnzako ndi tsidya lina.”

“Ayi, ineyo ndikudziwa kuti mwana wa Nwodika alibe maganizo aliwonse oipa. Ndikhoza kumva fungo la munthu yemwe akufuna kunditsirira chiphe ngati mmene ndinganunkhizire munthu amene m’mimba mwake mwavuta.”

Akuebue anali akupukusabe mutu wake. Ezeulu ankangoonekera pakhoma chithunzithunzi chake chikamasuntha. Chithunzithunzichi chinabwera ndi kuwala kwa koloboyi wamafuta a gwalangwa yemwe ankawala monyinyirika.

“Kodi sumaona zimene amachita pamene unamufunsa kuti amange mfundo yaubale komanso pomwe amadya mtedza wamagazi uja?” Ezeulu anapitiriza. “Akana-khala kuti anali ndi maganizo oipa ukanaona zimene zikanachitika paliwombo pake. Ayi, munthu ameneyu si

wokayikitsa. Koma amachita zinthu ngati makolo athu akale. Koma masiku ano anthu omwe akupezeka pali-ponse akumakhala ochuluka nzeru kwabasi. Ndiponso nzeru zawo zimakhala zopotoka, moti zinafika mpaka podelsa mphuno zawo.”

“Udzudzu wa kuno umangokhala ngati autuma. Munthu angapeze bwanji tulo udzudzu ukuluma chonchi?” anafunsa Akuebue, akukupa udzudzu wina womwe unkawuluka pafupi ndi khutu lake.

“Ingokhala phee uone udzudzu, tadikira pang’ono uone tikangozimitsa nyaliyi. Ndinangoiwala kupempha mwana wa Nwodika uja kuti akandipezere mpungabwi kuti ndiike kumutuku n’cholinga choti usandiyandikirensa. Koma kubwera kwanu kuja n’kumene kunandiiwalitsa zimenezi. Dzulo unangotsala pang’ono kutsopa magazi anga onse.” Nayenso anakupa udzudzu wake. “Kodi unati anthu a kunyumba kwanu ali bwino?” Anafunsa, pofuna kusintha nkhani imene anakambiranayo.”

“Pamene ndimawasiya samalongolola,” anayankha Akuebue akuyasamula ngati mvuu.

“Nanga bwanji nkhani ya Udenkwo ija? Pajatu sitinafike nayo kumapeto.”

“Pajadi,” anatero Akuebue mokhala ngati sakufuna.

“Udenkwo amandidetsa kukhosi kwambiri. Ndi mwana wanga wamkazi zoonza. Koma ndikhoza kukuuza kuti zochita zake sizisiyana ndi mayi ake. Ndakhala ndikumuuza kuti mkazi amene amaimitsa mutu wake ngati wasenza mtsuko wamadzi akakhala kubanja, banja limamukanika. N’zoonza kuti sindinamve mbali ya akuchimuna, koma zimene ndamva kuchokera kwa Udenkwo ndi zokwanira kudziwa zimene zinachitika. Ndikudziwiratu kuti akundinamiza moti si chifukwa chokwanira chimene wachokera kubanja. Anandiuza kuti apongozi ake kume-

neko anauza mwamuna wa Udenkwo kuti apereke tambala wa nsembe. Ndiye mwamunayo atafika kunyumba kwake analoza tambala wina n'kuuza ana kuti amugwire n'kumumanga. Pamapeto pake m'pamene zinadziwika kuti anali tambala wa Udenkwo ndipo mwiniwakeyo atamva zime-nezo anapsa mtima kwambiri. Pamenepotu m'pamene mapokoso analowera. Anatero nditamufunsa chimene wachokera kwa mwamuna wake. Ndiyeno ndinamufunsa funso lakuti: 'Ndiye umafuna kuti mwamuna wakoyo achite kupita kumsika kukagula tambala akazi ake ali ndi makolamakola a nkhuku?' Koma anandiyankha kuti: 'Ndiye n'chifukwa chiyani nthawi zonse akamafuna nkhuku amagwira yanga? N'chifukwa chiyani amaonerera nkhuku zangazi m'malo mogwira nkhuku za akazi enawo? Kapena mizimuyo inanena kuti imafuna kudya nkhuku zanga zokha?' Ndiyeno ine ndinamufunsa kuti: 'Kodi wakhala akugwira nkhuku zako maulendo angati komanso mwamuna angadziwe bwanji kuti nkhuku iyi ndi mkazi uyu, iyi ndi ya uyu?' Iye sanandiyakhe. Chimene amadziwa n'choti nthawi zonse apongozi ake akafuna tambala wopereka nsembe m'pamene amamukumbukira."

"Nkhani yake inali yomweyo basi?"

"Inde ndi yomweyo. Nkhani zake ndi zaziitu."

Ezeulu anamwetulira. "Munthutu akhoza kuganiza kuti azipongozi athu amapereka nsembe tsiku lililonse."

"Zimenezo ndi zimene ndinamuuza. Koma monga mmene ndanenera Udenkwo ali ngati mayi ake. Chimene chinamuwawa kwambiri ndi choti azipongozi akewo sanabwere kudzagwada n'kumupempha kuti awagaire nkhukuyo."

Ezeulu sanaikeponso mlomo mofulumira. Ankao-neka kuti akuganiziranso nkhaniyo.

"Mwamuna aliyense ali ndi njira yake yoyendetsera

zinthu pakhomo pake,” Ezeulu anatero pamapeto pake. “Chimene ndimachita ndikamafuna zinthu ngati zimenezo chimakhala kuitana mmodzi mwa akazi anga n’kumuuza kuti: ‘Ndikufuna zakutizakuti kuti ndikapereke nsembe, pita ukatenge ubweretse.’ Ndimadziwa kuti ndikhoza kukatenga ndekha, koma ndimamuuza iyeyo kuti akatenge yekha abweretse. Sindimaiwala zimene bambo anga ana- uza anzawo ena pamene ndinali kamnyamata. Iwo anati: ‘Pachikhalidwe chathu mwamuna samayenera kumachita kugubuduka pansi kapena kugwada kupempha mkazi wake kuti amukhulukire, kapena kumachita kumunya- mbita mapazi kuti amuchitire chinachake. Ngakhale izi zili choncho, mwamuna wanzeru amadziwa kuti pamafika nthawi zina zomwe amayenera kuchita zimenezi mwa- nseri ndipo zikavutitsitsa amafika mpaka potulutsa mawu akuti, ‘chonde’. Koma zangati zimenezo zikachitika pali- be amene amayenera kudziwa. Komanso ngati mutu mkaziyo umagwira, samakaima pachulu n’kuyamba ku- bwebwetuka za nkhaniyi, kapena kutsegula pakamwa pake n’kumauza azinzake. Ngati atachita zimenezo nthaka yonse imene mwamuna wakeyo anagwada kapena kugu- budukapo imatsegula pakamwa pake n’kumutafuna.’ Zi- menezo ndi zimene bambo anga anauza mnzawo yemwe anali ndi maganizo akuti mwamuna salakwa pakhomo pake. Mawu amenewa sindimawaiwala mpaka pano. Nkhuku ya mkazi wanga imakhalanso yanga pachifukwa chakuti mkaziyo ndi wanga ndipo chilichonse chomwe ali nacho ndi changanso. Ndiye mwachidule ndinganene kuti munthu akhoza kupewa mapokoso ngati amenewa ngati atamazindikira kuti pali njira zambiri zophera khoswe. Nthawi zina umangomunyengerera ndi kachakudya m’malo momugenda ndi mwisi.”

“Zimenezo ndi zoona,” anavomereza Akuebue.

“Koma azipongozi athuwo sangafune kumva mawu amenewo. Ndikabwera pa nkhani ya mwana wangayu, ndikufuna kuti asamaganize kuti mwamuna wake akangomukalipira pang’ono azibereka mwana wake wakumbuyo n’kugwira pankono mwana wake wina n’kumabwera kwa ine. Mayi anga sankachita zangati zimenezo. Udenkwo anaphunzira zimenezo kuchokera kwa mayi ake. Mkazi wangayu komanso mwana ameneyu adzapatsira mtima umenewo kwa ana awo mpaka m’tsogolo. Pajatu ng’ombe ikamamweta udzu wambiri ndi kukamwa kwake mwana wake amaiyang’ana kukamwa ndipo nayenso amadzachita zomwezo.”

Linali tsiku lachinayi chibwerere ku Okperi pamene Ezeulu analandira uthenga woti akakumane ndi Clarke. Iye anatsatira mesenjala yemwe anabwera ndi uthengawo n’kupita kuofesi ya mzunguyo. Kuofesiyo kunalinso anthu ena ambirimbiri omwe ankadikirira kuti akumane naye. Ena anali atakhala pazitsa, ndipo ena anakhala pansi pasimenti. Mesenjala uja anamusiya Ezeulu panja ndipo analowa mkati momwe munali anthu ambirimbiri omwe ankagwirira ntchito mzunguyo. Ezeulu ankaona mesenjala uja kudzera pazenera. Mesenjalayo ankayankhula ndi munthu yemwe ankaoneka kuti ankatsogolera anzakewo. Atakambirana kwa kanthawi, analoza kumene kunali Ezeulu ndipo munthuyo anatsatira chala chakecho ndi maso n’kuona Ezeulu. Koma atamuona anangogwedezera mutu n’kupitiriza zimene ankachita. Atamaliza zimene ankachitazo analowa muofesi yomwe inali mkati momwemo koma sanakhalitsemo. Atangotulukamo anakodola Ezeulu n’kumuuza kuti alowe. Atalowa mmenemo anapeza mzu-

ngu anamuitanitsayo akulemba m'buku lake. Chodabwitsa n'chakuti m'malo molemba ndi dzanja lamanja, ankalemba ndi dzanja lamanzere. Ezeulu atangoona zimenezo, anayamba kuganizira ngati pangapezeke munthu wakuda yemwe angajaire kulemba n'kufika pomalemba ndi dzanja lamanzere ngati mmene mzunguyo ankachitira.

“Dzina lako ndi Ezeulu?” anafunsa mzunguyo kudzera mwa womasulira wake.

Kumufunsa dzinaku kunamupsetsa mtima Ezeulu koma anadzigwira.

“Kodi sunamve funso limene ndakufunsa? Mzunguyu akufuna kudziwa ngati dzina lako ndi Ezeulu kapena ayi.”

“Muuze mzunguyo kuti apite kwa bambo ake ndi mayi ake akawafunse maina awo.”

Pamenepo womasulira ndi mzungu uja anayang'anizana. Mzunguyo anaipitsa nkhope yake koma kenako anamwetulira. Ndiyeno kudzera mwa womasulira wakeyo anamuuzza kuti sanamufunse dzina lakelo ngati chipongwe.

“Mmenemu ndi mmene mzungu amachitira zinthu,” anatero womasulira uja. Mzungu uja ankangomuyang'ana Ezeulu modabwa kwambiri. Womasulirayo atamaliza kuyankhula, mzunguyo anaipitsanso nkhope yake n'kuyamba kudzudzula Ezeulu polephera kusonyeza ulemu atauzidwa kuti abwere kuboma. Anamuuzanso kuti akadzasonyezanso khalidwe limenelo adzapatsidwa chilango chokhwima kwambiri.

“Umuze kuti,” anatero Ezeulu, “ndikudikirabe kumva uthenga womwe wandiitanira.” Koma mawu amene-wa asanamasuliridwe mzunguyo ananyamula dzanja lake n'kuyankhula mokalipa kwambiri.

Ezeulu sankafunikanso munthu womasulira kuti

adziwe kuti mzunguyo safuna munthu wochuluka nzeru. Kenako mzunguyo anakhala kaye chete kuti mtima wake ukhale pansi ndipo anayamba kulakatula ubwino wa boma la azungu. Clarke ankafunitsitsa kuyamba ndi kufotokoza ubwinowu ngakhale zikanakhala kuti pali wina yemwe anauza kale Ezeulu zimenezi. Choncho anayamba kufotokoza ubwino wa boma la azungu kwa wansembe wozdikuzayu, yemwe ankafuna kumuchitira chifundo pomukweza kuti akhale woposa anzake komanso yemwe m'malo mobweza ulemu ankachita mwano waukulu. Koma chifukwa cha kuuma khosi kwa mkuluyu, Clarke anafika mpaka posowa chonena. Pamene ankafotokoza zimenezi mkwiyo wake unkangoyakirayakirabe akaona kudzikuza kwa Ezeulu. Koma mwamwayi chifukwa choti ankayanikhula kudzera mwa womasulira wake ndipo ankafunika kupumira kaye poyankhula, Clarke anakwanitsa kudzi-gwira.

Kenako anapereka ganizo lawo lija kwa Ezeulu. Nkhope ya Mkulu Wansembeyo sinasinthe m'pang'ono pomwe pamene anamva zoti akufuna kumulonga ufumu. Iye anangokhala duu ngati chosema.

Clarke ankadziwa kuti patenga nthawi kuti azindikire kuti udindo umene ankafuna kumupatsawo ndi waukulu zedi.

“Ndiye mukuvomera kupatsidwa udindowu kapena ayi?” Clarke anayankhula mawu amenewa modzikuza kwambiri mokhala ngati akumuuzwa kuti ndikudziwa kuti sungakane mwayi ngati umenewu kapolo iwe!

“Umuuze mzunguyu kuti Ezeulu sangakhale mfu-mu ya munthu aliyense, kupatulapo kukhala wansembe wa Ulu.”

“Wati bwanji!” anatero mozazira Clarke. “Koma mutu wa munthuyu umagwira?”

“Ndikuganiza choncho Sah,” anatero womasulira uja m’chizungu chonyozololoka.

“Ngati zili choncho, ndiyetu tuluka naye muno ukamutsekere.” Clarke anali ataudya moto wa mkwiyo. Mumtima mwake ankangoti: ‘Koma ndiye ndi wodzimvatu! Zoona sing’anga ngati ameneyu angamayankhule pamaso pa ine atatulutsa nsana!’

14

Pamene masiku atatu ankatha, mbiri ya Ezeulu inali itaziziriratu kunyumba zaboma kuja. Poyamba anthu ankaganiza kuti kumangidwa kwake kuchititsa kuti akwiye kwambiri n’kumalizitsa Winterbottom. Koma masiku ankangodutsa ndipo sanamve uthenga uliwonse woti Kaputeni Winterbottom waluma mano. Koma kenako nkhani ya Ezeulu inaukanso mwamtundu wina. Nkhani yake inali ya zimene anachita pokana kukhala mfumu. M’dziko lonse la anthu a mtundu wa chilbo, nkhani ngati imeneyi inali isanamvekepo. Anthu ankaona kuti n’kupusa kwakukulu kukana mwayi wamzama ngati umenewu. Koma ena ankaona kuti munthu wochita zimenezo ayenera kupatsidwa ulemu wapadera chifukwa si zophweka.

Ezeulu anali wokhutira ndi mmene zinthu zinayendera. M’maganizo mwake anali atamanga kale mfundo yoti ayendere, ndipo pa nthawi n’kutinso ataiwala kaye za mzunguyo. Komabe, nthawi zina ankangopezeka kuti wayamba kuganizira za mwayi anapatsidwawo moti pena kamtima kotu akanangovomera kankamubwerera. Zimenezi zinkachitika akaganizira kuti Wintabota ankamufunira zabwino. Kungoti vuto linali anthu omwe ankawatumama, monga mesenjala komanso mzungu wopanda ulemu anayankhula naye uja. Anthu amenewa ankachititsa kuti Wintabota azioneke woipa. Komanso anakumbukira kuti zaka zapitazo, ndi Wintabota yemweyo amene ananena

kuti Ezeulu ndi munthu woona mtima yemwe Amayankhula chilungamo pa anthu onse omwe ankakachitira umboni pa nkhani ya kusamvana komwe kunabuka pakati pa Okperi ndi Umuaro. Ndi mzungu yemweyunso amene anamulangiza kuti atumize mwana wake kuti akaphunzire nzeru za azungu. Zinthu zonsezi zinkasonyezeratu kuti anali ndi mtima wabwino komanso ankamufunira zabwino. Koma kodi ubwino wake unali pati ngati zolinga zabwinozo zinachititsa kuti adzathere kumalo ngati amenewa omwe sankapatsidwa ulemu? Ataona zimene zinamuchitikirazi anayamba kukhala ndi maganizo ofanana ndi a mkazi wina yemwe anaona kupanda pake kwa moyo mwamuna yemwe anamukwatira atasintha kuyamba kumuzunza. Mkaziyo analira modandaula kuti: “Akhoza kumandida mmene angathere, bola ngati akumandipatsa zilazi zoti ndizidya.”

“Mulimonsemo,” Ezeulu anadziuza choncho, “Wintabota ayenera kuyankha pa machimo onse amene atumiki ake anapalamula. Munthu amene akuyenda mumsika wodzaza ndi zinthu ayenera kumayenda mosamala kuti chovala chake chisakole zinthu za eni. Zangati zimenezo zikachitika, anthu samaimba mlandu chovala chakecho. Amamukamata iyeyo n’kumulipiritsa ndipo akalemphera amangomuwomba.

Koma mosasamala kanthu za zonsezi, maganizo omwe anakula mphamvu kwambiri m’mutu mwa Ezeulu anali akuti tsopano mgwirizano ndi mzungu wakanika. Azunguwo anali asanamuuzebe chimene ankamusungira m’ndende. Komabe iye ankaona kuti mavuto aakulu ali pakati pa iyeyo ndi anthu a mtundu wake, ndipo mosadziwa mzungu ndi amene anali kumbali yake. Kwa nthawi yonse yomwe anakhala ku Okperi, Ezeulu anatsimikiza mtima kumenya nkondo yolimbana ndi adani ake.

Poyamba, ndi anthu ochepa a ku Umuaro omwe anakhulupirira nkhani yakuti Ezeulu wakana kukhala mfumu. Iwo ankadzifunsa kuti, ‘Zatheka bwanji kuti akane chinthu chomwe wakhala akuchilakalaka kwa nthawi yaitali?’ Atabwerera kwawo, Akuebue anayamba kumwaza nkhaniyi ndipo posakhalitsa anthu omwe anamvawo anafalitsa nkhaniyi m’godya zonse za Umuaro komanso midzi ina yozungulira.

Nwaka wa ku Umunneora atamva za nkhaniyi anangoluma mlomo wake. Iye anadya mutu wake koma sanamvetsebe.

“Zatheka bwanji zimenezi? Ndithu Ezeulu ndi wodzimva ngati wamisala,” anatero Nwaka. “Zimenezi zikungopheramphongo zimene ndakhala ndikunena kuti anayamwira misala ya mayi ake.”

Monga ankachitira nthawi zonse, Nwaka ankaya-nkhula zimenezi chifukwa chosamufunira zabwino Ezeulu, komabe sikuti ankanama ayi. Zikuoneka kuti nthawi zina mayi a Ezeulu, dzina lawo a Nwanyieke, ankagwidwa ndi misala yaikulu. Anthu ena ankanena kuti zikanakhala kuti mwamuna wawo sanali wodziwa kuseweretsa nsupa, bwenzi misala yawoyo ili yosalekeza.

Kupatulapo Nwaka komanso adani ena a Ezeulu, anthu ambiri a mu Umuaro anayamba kuona kuti zimene ankaganiza zokhudza Ezeulu ndi zolakwika moti Anayamba kuona kuti ankamulakwira kwambiri. Kenako chiwerengero cha anthu omwe ankapita ku Okperi kukamuona chinayamba kukwera tsiku ndi tsiku, ndipo ena ankamutengera zilazi komanso mphatso zina.

Patapita milungu iwiri kuchokera pamena anagonekedwa

pachipatala cha Nkisa, Kaputeni Winterbottom anayamba kuwongokera ndipo Tony Clarke anayamba kuloledwa kukumana naye. Komabe ankangololedwa kumuona kwa mphindi zisanu zokha basi. Clarke akamachita zimenezi, Mayi Savage ankaima pakhomo n’kumawerengera nthawi akuyang’ana wotchi yawo.

Clarke atalowa, anaona Winterbottom atayereratu moti ankangokhala ngati mtembo womwe ukumwetulira.

“Zikukuyendera bwanji aise?” anafunsa Winterbottom akumwetulira.

Clarke analephera kudzigwira kuti Winterbottom amalize kaye kuyankhula. Iye anangoilowa ndi nkhani ya Ezeulu yemwe anakana kukhala mfumu. Clarke ankafunitsitsa kumva maganizo ake pa nkhaniyi asanatseke pakamwa pake n’kugona tulo tosadzukanso.

“Musamutulutse m’ndendemo kufikira ataphunzira kumachita zinthu mogwirizana ndi ulamuliro wathu.”

“Pajatu ndinakuuzani kuti musayankhule,” anatero Mayi Savage, akupita kumene kunali Winterbottom kwinaku akumwetulira ngati wadya tsabola. Kaputeni Winterbottom anali atatseka maso ake ndipo ankaoneka kuti sali bwino. Tony Clarke anadziimba mlandu kwambiri moti anatuluka nthawi yomweyo m’chipindacho. Komabe, nkhani yomwe inkamusowetsa mtendere inali itachoka paphewa pake. Pamene ankabwerera kunyumba zaboma, Clarke anamutayira kamtengo Kaputeni Winterbottom chifukwa ngakhale ankadwala kwambiri anadzilimbitsa n’kunenabe mawu oyenerera. Mawu akuti ‘kumachita zinthu mogwirizana ndi ulamuliro wathu,’ ndi amene ankatulukatuluka pakamwa pa anthu a maudindo akulu-akulu m’boma la azungu.

Ezeulu atakana kukhala mfumu, Clarke anayesa kumunyengerera kudzera mwa Kalaliki Wamkulu kuti

amuthandize kusintha maganizo, koma nayenso analephera. Zitafika pamenepo, nayenso anangotopa nazo. Kodi tsopano akanatani? Kodi akanamangomusungabe m'ndende kapena ankafunika kungomumasula? Ngati akanangomusiya m'ndende ndiye kuti mbiri ya boma lawo ikananunkhiratu ku Umuaro konse, komwe anthu ake ankadana kale ndi boma la azungu komanso chipembedzo chawo chachikhristu. Malinga ndi mmene Clarke ankao-nera, anthu a ku Umuaro ndi amene anali osagwirizanika akawayerekezera ndi anthu a mitundu ina ya m'chigawo chawo. Sukulu yomwe anakhazikitsa ku Umuaro inali itangotha chaka chimodzi chokha basi ndipo mishoni ya tchalitchi chachikhristu yomwe inabzalidwa m'derali inafera m'mazira maulendo angapo ndipo pano inkakula monyentchera kwambiri ngati mbewu yobzalidwa padwale. "Kodi anthu oona zinthu motere akanatumbwa chamtundu wanji akanaona sing'anga wawo akubwerera kunyumba ali bwinobwino pambuyo poti wangomaliza kumene kunyoza boma lathu?" anatero Clarke mumtima mwake.

Koma Clarke sanali munthu woti n'kutsekera munthu m'ndende popanda mlandu. Ndiye popeza anali atapatsidwa yankho kuchokera kwa Winterbottom, iye anayamba kuona kuti nkhanayi anaisamalira molakwika kuchokera pachiyambi. Komabe sakanachitira mwina chifukwa ankangotsatira zimene anauzidwa. Komabe, chomwe chinkamudetsa nkhwana ndi ichi: Ngati akanapitirizabe kusunga munthuyu m'ndende, anthu akanaona kuti amumanga popanda chifukwa. Komanso kodi akanalemba kuti amumanga pa mlandu wanji m'mabuku ake? Kodi akanalemba kuti wamangidwa chifukwa amachita masewera ndi boma? Kapena chifukwa choti wakana kukhala mfumu? Nkhani yaing'onoyi inachititsa kuti mutu wake uzungulire. Iye ankadziwa kuti anthu ambiri sadziwa

zimene angalembezi komabe anaona kuti si chilungamo kumangoyang'ana munthu akuwolera m'ndende pa mlandu wosadziwika. Ataganizira nkhaniyi, anaona kuti sangapitirize kusunga munthu wachikulireyu m'ndende popanda chifukwa chomveka bwino. “Zimene ndachita ndi nkhani ya munthu ameneyu ndi zopanda nzeru kwabasi,” iye anatero mumtima mwake ataganiziranso yankho limene Winterbottom anamupatsa lija. Zimene anaphunzira pamenepa ndi zoti, ngati anthu akale kwambiri ngati Winterbottom ankapereka malangizo osathandiza ngati amenewa, ndiye kuti achinyamata omwe anawapeza akanatha kuchita zinthu zomwe akuona kuti zingawathandize. Zimenezi zinathetsa maganizo ake akuti anthu amene anabwera kale ku Africa ndi amene amadziwa njira zabwino zothetsera nkhani komanso kuti mfundo imene anena siziyenera kunyalanyazidwa mwachisawawa.

Matenda a Kaputeni Winterbottom anayambiranso kuipiraipira moti palibenso munthu amene analoledwa kukamuona kwa milungu iwiri yotsatira. Pakati pa antchito komanso ogwira ntchito ku nyumba zaboma m'zigawo zonse, mphekesera zinayamba kumveka kuti Winterbottom wapenga misala ndipo ena ankati wafa ziwalo. Nayonso nkhani yonena za Ezeulu inapitirizabe kufalikira ngati moto wolusa. Ndiye popeza chimene anamumangira chinadziwika paliponse, anthu anayamba kumumvera chisoni kwambiri. Iye sanachite choipa chilichonse kwa mzungu moti sakanalakwa kunyamula *ofo* wake n'kuyamba kulimbana ndi mzunguyo. Pa nthawi ngati imeneyo chilichonse chimene Ezeulu akanachita sikuti chikanango-khala chovomerezeka, koma anthu akanakhalanso kumba-

li yake. Ngakhale zinali choncho, John Nwodika anafo-
tokoza kuti Ezeulu ali ngati njoka ya mphiri yomwe
simaluma chisawawa, koma ikati ilume imalumiratu.
Koma ngati Ezeulu akanadikira kwa nthawi yaitali kuti
alume mpaka munthu akumuzunzayo kuthawa, apo ndiye
kukanakhala kupusa kwake. Ezeulu anali atachenjeza
mokwanira mzunguyo, tingoti kwa misika yonse inayi
imene anakhala m'ndende. Ndiye palibe akanamuimba
mlandu ngati akanabwezera mdani wakeyo pomuchotsera
maganizo ake kuti azerezereke kapena kupha mbali
imodzi ya thupi lake. Pa nthawiyo matenda amenewa anali
oipa kuposa imfa.

Ezeulu tsopano anali atakhala m'ndende kwa nthawi
yaitali. Mzungu anali atatumiza nthumwi zambirimbi
kuti zikamunyengerere kuti asinthe maganizo koma iye
anamenyetsa nkhwangwa pamwala. Ndiye mmawa wa
tsiku lina, patsiku *Eke* wachisanu ndi chitatu kungo-
chokera pamene anamangidwa, iye anauzidwa kuti azipita
kwawo. Chomwe chinadabwitsa kwambiri mesenjala ko-
manso kalaliki wamkulu yemwe anabweretsa uthengawu
n'chakuti Ezeulu atamva uthengawu anangoyamba kuseka
koopsa.

“Mukufuna mudiuze kuti mzunguyo watopa?”

Anthu awiriwo anangomwetulira mosonyeza ku-
gwirizana nazo.

“Ndimaganizatu kuti sagonja nsanga. Ndiye kuti
ndimamuganizira kuposa mmene alili eti?”

“Mzungutu ndi choncho,” anatero kalaliki wamkulu
uja.

“Ine ndima funa kumalimbana ndi munthu amene
amati akaiputa ndewu amaima nazo, osati munthu amene
amakonda kuputa anzawo, ndewu ikayambika n'kusiya
fumbi.”

Anthu awiriwo ankaoneka kuti akuvomerezana ndi zimenezi malinga ndi mmene nkhope zawo zinkaonekera.

“Kodi mukudziwa dzina limene adani anga a kumene ndachokera amanditchula?” anafunsa Ezeulu. Pa nthawi imeneyi mwana wa Nwodika anatulukira kuti adzasonyeze chisangalalo chake atamva zoti Ezeulu wamasulidwa.

“Mufunsemi uyo, akuuzani. Anthu amanena kuti ndine mnzake wa mzungu. Amati Ezeulu ndi amene anachititsa kuti mzungu apite ku Umuaro. Si choncho, iwe mwana wa Nwodika?”

“Ndi momwemo ndithu,” anayankha motero mwana wa Nwodika akuoneka kuti wasokonezeka pouzidwa kuti ayankhire nkhani yomwe anangoipezera pakati.

Ezeulu anapha ntchentche yomwe inatera pamwendu wake. Ntchentcheyo inabwera pansu ndipo iye anayamba kuyang’ana mwachidwi dzanja lomwe anagwiritsira ntchito pakupha ntchentcheyo. Kenako anapukuta dzanjalo pamphasa ija kuti achotse matumbo a ntchentcheyo n’kuyambanso kuli yang’ana ngati pali tina ndi tina tomwe tatsalira.

“Two amanena kuti ndinawapereka kwa mzungu.”

Iye anali akuyang’anabe dzanja lake lija. Kenako anayamba kudziyankhula yekha: “N’chifukwa chiyani ndikuuza anthu adera nkhani imeneyi?” Kenako anasiya kuyankhula.

“Musalole kuti zimenezi zizikuvutitsani maganizo,” anatero John Nwodika. “Kodi ndi angati mwa adani anuwomene angalimbane ndi mzungu n’kufika pomufiiritsa maso ngati mmene mwachitiramu.”

Ezeulu anaseka. “Kodi ukunena kuti kumeneku n’kulimbana? Ayi mphwanga. Ifetu sitinalimbane, tango dziwana basi. Ndidzalimbana naye ulendo wina, koma

choyamba ndikufuna ndikalimbane kaye ndi anthu a mtundu wanga omwe ndimawadziwa bwino. Ndikubwerera kumudzi kuti ndikalimbane ndi onse omwe akhala akutenga zala zawo n’kumanditokosa m’mphuno. Ndikufuna kukawauza kuti atuluke kumipanda yawo kuti tili mbane ndipo amene akapambane akapulula mikanda yonse yaulemu yomwe ili muakakolo a mnzake wogonjayo.”

“Mukunena kulimbana kofanana ndi kwa Eneke Ntulukpa, kulimbana kwa mbalame ndi chilombo?” anatero John Nwodika mosangalala. “Kodi nawenso umadziwa nkhani imeneyi?” anafunsa Ezeulu mosangalala.

John Nwodika anayamba kuimba nyimbo yamnyozo yomwe mbalame yotchedwa Eneke inaimba poderera dziko lonse. Anthu awiri achilendo omwe anali pamalowo anayamba kuseka. Nwodika ankangochita zinthu ngatidi mbalameyo.

“Amene adzagonjetse mnzake,” anatero Ezeulu nyimbo ija itatha, “adzapulula timipando tonse taulemu timene wogonjayo ali nato.”

Kutuluka m’ndende kwa Ezeulu chinali chosankha chachikulu chomwe Clarke anapanga payekha. Panali patatha mlungu wathunthu kungochokera pamene anapita ku Nkisa kukafunsa maganizo kwa Winterbottom. Zimene anachita posankha kuti Ezeulu amutulutse m’ndende zinamupatsa mangolomera moti anayamba kuchita zinthu molimba mtima. Iye analemba makalata opita kwa bambo ake komanso chibwenzi chake ku Ulaya ndipo m’makalatamo anatchulamo modziseka za ukhwangwala womwe anasonyeza m’mbuyomo. N’zosachita kufunsa kuti kulimba mtima kumeneku kunabwera atauzidwa kuchokera kumalikulu kuti akhoza kumapanga zosankha zina yekha komanso kumatsegula makalata achinsinsi omwe sanalembedwe kuti akupita kwa Winterbottom.

Kenako mesenjala anatulukira ali ndi makalata awiri m'manja. Kalata imodzi inali yofufuma bwino ndipo inamatidwa ndi zomatira zofiira. Mmene kalatayo inkao-nekera, zinali zoonekeratu kuti inali yachinsinsi kwambiri ndipo malangizo ake anali akuti ikangotsegulidwa n'kuwerengedwa, iwotchedwe. Iye anaiyang'ana kalatayo mwachidwi ndipo anaona kuti sinali yopita kwa Winterbottom. Pa nthawiyi anayamba kudzimva ngati munthu amene walowetsedwa m'kagulu kachinsinsi. Kenako anaiika kalatayo pambali kuti awerenge kaye kalata yaing'ono ija. Ataitsegula anapeza kuti yangokhala telegalamu ya sabata ndi sabata yomwe inkachokera ku ofesi yotumiza mauthenga. Ofesiya inali pamtunda wamamailosi 50 kuchokera kunyumba zabomaku. Kalatayo inkana kuti anthu ayamba kunyanyala ntchito ku Russia ndiponso kuti alimi sakufuna kupita kumunda. "Akhaula aona," iye anatero, ndipo kenako anaiika pambali. Chimene chinatsala ndi telegalamu imeneyi chinali kuitenga n'kukaimata pabolodi lachidziwitso madzulo a tsiku limenelo. Koma tsopano ankafunika kutsegula kalaya yonenepa ija.

Kalata imeneyi inkachokera kwa *Secretary for Native Affairs on Indirect Rule In Eastern Nigeria*. M'mbuyo yomo kunabweranso kalata ina yomwe inanena kuti zimene zili m'kalata yonenepayo ndi zimene anakambirana pamsonkhano wa ma Senior Political Officers ku Enugu womwe Kaputeni Winterbottom analephera kukakhalapo chifukwa cha matenda. Kalatayo inanena kuti, ngakhale kuti mafumu ena akumachita zachinyengo komanso zosagwirizanika, lamulo lomwe ankayendera silinasinthe.

Kusankha mafumu inali ntchito ya Winterbottom. Ngakhale kuti anali asanauzidwe kuti lamulo losankha mafumu lasinthidwa, zinali zoonekeratu kuti sapitiriza kusankha mafumu m'madera enanso atsopano. Zikuoneka

kuti nkhani yokhudza mfumu ya ku Okperi ndi imene inatchulidwa kwambiri. Kalatayo inamaliza ndi kupempha Winterbottom kuti asamalire nkhanayi mochenjera kuti anthu am'mudzi asaganize kuti boma silikudziwa chimene likuchita chifukwa zingabweretse mavuto aakulu kwa mbiri.

Patatha masiku angapo, Clarke anapita kukauza Winterbottom zokhudza lipoti komanso kalata yochoka kwa Lieutenant Governor ija. Koma Winterbottom anachita zinthu zodabwitsa kwambiri chifukwa sanasonyeze chidwi n'komwe. N'kutheka kuti anachita zimenezi chifukwa cha matenda ankadwalawo. Iye anangoyankhula chapansipasi mawu akuti: *A Lieutenant Governor amachita zinthu ngati munthu wozungulira mutu!*

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Ngakhale inali nyengo yadzinja, m'mawa kutangocha Ezeulu ndi John Nwodika anauyamba ulendo wopita ku Umuaro. John sanalole kuti Ezeulu ayende yekha paulendo wautali umenewu. Ezeulu anamuchonderera kuti atsale koma sanalole.

“Umenewu si ulendo woti munthu ngati inuyo n'kuyenda nokha,” iye anatero. “Ngati mwatsimikiza mti-ma kubwerera lero, ineyo ndikuperekezani. Apo ayi dikirani mupita mawa Obika akabwera.”

“Sindikufuna kukhalanso kuno tsiku lina,” anatero Ezeulu ndipo akumwetulira anapitiriza kuti, “Ndikungokhala ngati kamba yemwe anagwera m'dzenje lodzaza ndi matudzi kwa misika iwiri yathunthu. Anthu omupulumutsa atabwera pa tsiku lachisanu ndi chitatu anayamba kukuwa kuti: ‘Tanditulutsani mofulumira muno ndikulephera kupuma ine!’”

Onse ananyamukadi. Ezeulu anamanga nsalu yowala yam'chiwuno ndipo ina yokhuthala anaipachika paphunzi. Nsalu yokhuthalayi anaidutsitsa kumbuyo kwa phewa lakumanzere n'kudzailowetsa m'nkhwapa mwake. Paphe-wa lomweli m'pamene anapachikapo chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi chomwe chinali ndi zingwe zazitali. M'dzanja lake lamanja ananyamula *alo* wake. Imeneyi inali ndodo yachitsulo. Ndodoyi inali yaitali ndiponso yosongoka kumapeto ngati mkondo. Amene ankakhala

ndi ndodo imeneyi ndi okhawo amene anali amuna olozeka mu Umuaro ndipo ankainyamula akamapita ku zochitika zapadera. Pamutu pake panali chisoti chofiira cha *ozo*. Kuzungulira chisoticho panamangidwa chingwe chachikopa ndipo pamenepo m'pamene panazikidwa nthenga ya chiwombankhanga yomwe inaloza chakumbu-yo.

John Nwodika anavala Malaya okhuthala ooneka ngati katondo komanso buluku lakhaki.

Kunja kunapitirizabe kuwala kufikira pamene anayenda theka la ulendo wawo. Kenako kunasinthwa mwadzidzidzi ndipo mvula inayamba kupwatamuka. Zinkangokhala ngati ikunena kuti: *Tsopano ndiwachape mowkwanira chifukwa ngakhale atatani palibe kumene angathawire*. Kumwamba kunkangokhala ngati kwatseguka moti mvula inagwa ngati madzi ochokera m'chidebe.

Ataona izi, John Nwodika ananena kuti: “Tiyeni tibisale pansa pa mtengo kuti isachite kutinyowetsa mpaka m'mimba.”

“Ndi zoopsa kuima pansa pa mtengo kukamagwa mvula yamphenzi ngati imeneyi. Sitifa ayi, tiye tizingopita. Nanga tachita kukhala nchere kuti tisungunuka? Komanso sitinanyamule mankhwala oipa pathupi lathu, si choncho?”

Anthuwo anakoka phazi, zovala zawo zitakhuta madzi ngati zikuopa kugundana ndi thupi. Chikwama chachikopa chambuzi cha Ezeulu chinali chitadzaza ndi madzi ndipo ankadziwa kuti zinthu zomwe anaika mmenemo zawonongeka. Chipewa anavala kumutu chijanso nacho chinasinthiratu mtundu. Koma Ezeulu sanade nkha-wa ndi zimenezo. Kuvumbidwa ndi mvula kotereku kunamupatsa mphamvu. Mphamvu zimene anapeza zinali zofanana ndi zimene ana amapeza akaona mvula. Ama-

pengeratu n'kutsomphoka m'manja mwa makolo awo
n'kumakathamangathamanga pamvula ali chinokino,
kwinaku akuimba kuti:

*“Mili zobe ezobe!!
Ka mgbaba ogwogwo!”*

Koma mphamvu zomwe mvulayi inkamupatsa zinkaulula mkwiyo woopsa womwe unali mumtima mwake. Kuvutika kumene ankavutika ndi mvulayo kunapangitsa kuti zifukwa zina zomwe anali nazo ndi anthu zitumbuke. Akamapirira mvulayo m'pamene mkwiyo wake unkayakirayakira. Iye anatsimikiza zosonkhanitsa milandu yonse yomwe inali kumtima kwake n'kuiunjika poteropo.

Kenako anapinda chala chake chamkombaphala n'kuchiyendetsa pachipumi pake kuti achotse madzi omwe ankatsika kuchokera m'mutu n'kumamulowa m'maso. Madziwo ankachititsa kuti asamaone bwinobwino. Nsewu waukulu watsopano uja unali utadzaza madzi ndipo unkangokhala ngati thawale lakatondo. Ndodo ya Ezeulu inkati ikajoba pansi sinkapita patali. Kosongoka kuja kunkangolowa pansi mwina chala chimodzi ndipo inkakumana ndi nthaka yolimba. Mwa apa ndi apo mvulayo inkayamba kuchepa mokhala ngati ikuwamvera chisoni. Zikaterere Ezeulu ndi John ankatha kuona mitengo ikuluikulu yomwe masamba ake ankayoyola madontho akuluakulu a mvulayo. Koma mvula yake inali yachipongwe chifukwa posakhalitsa inkayambanso kukhuthuka n'kufika poti ankalephera kuona kumene akupita.

Zikanakhala bwino kwambiri mvulayo ikanathera pakhungu lawo. Koma imeneyi inali yamwano kwambiri chifukwa inalowa ndi m'mafupa momwe moti inachititsa kuti azizidwe kwambiri. Inapitirizabe kugwa mpaka Eze-

ulu anachita tsembwe ndipo zala zake zinauma ngati matsatsa.

“Wavumbwidwa choncho chifukwa cha kusamvera kwako,” Ezeulu anatero kwa John Nwodika. Mawu ake ankatuluka movutikira kwambiri chifukwa cha kukongwa.

“Inuyotu ndi amene mukundidetsa nkhawa, enafe tidakali anyamata amagazi.”

“Ukudera nkhawa za ine? Udera bwanji nkhawa ine, munthu yemwe waona masiku ambiri komanso wagona tulo tokwanira pamoyo wake? Usadandaule za ine mwana wanga. Komansotu tangotsala pang’ono kufika. Kwakula n’kometa, kwachepa n’kwatsumba.”

Mvumbi inanso inatsekereza zimene John Nwodika ankafuna kuyankha.

Atafika kunyumba, anthu anada nkhawa kwambiri ataona Ezeulu ali njenjenje. Posakhalitsa anamukolezera moto kuti aziwotha ndipo mkazi wake Ugoye, ankamupangira mankhwala oti amwe. Koma choyamba ankafunika madzi oti atsukire mapazi ake, omwe anali atasinthiratu mtundu ndi matope a katondo. Kenako anatenga mankhwala omwe mkazi wake ankamupangira aja n’kudzipaka pachifuwa ndipo Edogo anawathandiza kuwapaka kunsana. Matefi ndi amene ankayenera kuphikira Ezeulu madzulo umenewo (iwo ankawerengerabe masiku ngakhale kuti Ezeulu kunalibe) anali atayambapo kale kuphika nsuzi wa *utazi*. Ezeulu anamwa nsuziwo uli wotentha ndipo kenako anayamba kumvako kufunda.

Pamene Ezeulu ankafika kunyumba kwake mvula ija inali itakata. Chinthu choyamba chimene anachita atangomaliza kumwa nsuzi uja kunali kutumiza Nwafo kuti akauze Akuebue zoti wabwera.

Akuebue anali akupera fodya wapamphuno pamene Nwafo ankafika. Iye sanadikire kuti amalize ntchitoyo

moti anapungulira fodya wosapereka bwinobwinoyo m'botolo pogwiritsa ntchito mpeni wowonda. Kenako anasesa mphero ankagwiritsira ntchitoyo n'kusonkhanitsa fodya wotsalira ndipo anamutenga n'kumuikanso m'botolo muja. Kachiwiri anasesanso pampheroyo pogwiritsa ntchito nthenga kufikira pamene fumbi lonse lafodyayo linalowa m'botolo muja. Kenako anachotsa mpheroyo ndipo anaitana m'modzi wa akazi ake n'kumuuza kuti akuchokapo.

“Ngati Osenigwe atabwera kudzabwereka mphero,” anatero Akuebue akuponyera nsalu yake paphuzi, “umuze kuti sindinamalize kuigwiritsa ntchito.”

Pakhomo pa Ezeulu panali patafika kale anthu angapo pamene Akuebue ankatulukira. Anthu onse oyangandikira nyumba anali ali komweko ndipo ena omwe ankadutsa munsewu n'kumva kuti Ezeulu wabwera nawonso anakhota kuti akamupatse moni. Ezeulu sanayankhule zambiri moti ankayankha moniyo ndi maso kapena ku gwedeza mutu basi. Nthawi inali isanakwane yoti ayan khule kapena kuonetsa ntchito zake. Kumeneko ndiye kuopsa kwa mphiri. Imakhala yopirira moti imatha kulolera kupondedwa kapena kuphinyidwa. Imadikira mpaka itanola bwinobwino mano ake. Ndiyeno ikati ilume, imagagada munthu amene akuitengera kumtsoyo n'kumupheratu.

Zonse zimene anthu anayesetsa kuchita kuti Ezeulu ayankhule zinangopita pachabe. Anthu omwe ankapita kukamuona akamayesetsa kuyankhula zokhudza kukana kwake kukhala mfumu, iye ankangomwetulira. Sikuti ankachita izi ponyansidwa ndi anthuwo kapena uthenga umene anakambawo ayi. Kunena zoonankamva bwino kwambiri akamamvetsera anthuwo akunena zimenezo ndipo ankachita kulakalaka mwana wa Nwodika akana-

khalapo kuti awafotokozere zonse zimene zinachitika. Koma atangofika, mwana wa Nwodika sanachedwe moti posakhalitsa anatsata njira yakwawo kuti akagone usikuwo n'cholinga choti m'mawa agwire tambala kukamwa n'kubwerera ku Okperi. Iye anakana ndi kutsuka matope omwe anali kumapazi kwake komwe.

“Ineyo ndiilowanso mvulayi,” iye anatero. “Ndi-pindula chiyani kutsuka mapazi anga n'kukalowanso m'chithaphwi.”

Mokhala ngati amadziwa zimene Ezeulu ankaganiza, nthawi yomweyo mlendo wina anati: “Mzungu amayenda m'mbali, wadziwa kuti Ezeulu nayenso mpachulu. Koma pali mbali imodzi ya nkhaniyi imene sindikuimve-tsabe mpaka pano. Ndikufuna kumva zambiri kuchokera kwa mwana wa Nwodika wa ku Umunneora. Ndili ndi mafunso awiri kapena atatu amene ndikufuna ndimufunse.”

“Inenso maganizo anga anali omwewo,” anatero Anosi.

“Monga ndafotokozera kale, mwana wa Nwodika,” anatero Akuebue, yemwe ankakhala ngati ndiye kamwa la Ezeulu, “wamuthandiza Ezeulu kwambiri.”

Munthu winayo anaseka. “Anafika mpaka pame-nepo? Koma abale! Zikuoneka kuti ali m'gulu la anthu omwe amaphonya pakamwa pawo chifukwa chamdima n'kupezeka kuti aika mbamu ya *fofoo* mumphuno. Basi ndiuzeni nkhani ina.”

“Osadzayerekeza kukhulupirira munthu wa ku Umunneora. Zimenezo ndi zimene ndingakuuzeni.” Amene ananena mawu amenewa anali Anosi. “Ngati munthu wa ku Umunneora wandiuza kuti ndiime ndiyenera kuthawa ndi mphamvu zanga zonse. Akandiuza kuti, ‘thawa,’ m'pamene ndifunika kuima pomwepo.”

“Koma ameneyu ndi wosiyana ndi ena,” anatero Akuebue. “Kuyenda kwamuphunzitsa khalidwe. Ngakhale chilombo chimaphunzira kukhala ndi anzake chikapita kuchilendo.”

“Hi-hi-hi-hi,” anaseka Ifeme. “Anthu am’mudzi umene ujatu amangoipiratu akayenda moti utambwali wawo umangokhodzokera n’kufika posauzana. Bwanji ukuyankhula ngati mwana Akuebue?”

“Kodi ukudziwa chifukwa chake mvula yakhuthuka masana onsewa?” anafunsa Anosi. “N’chifukwatu choti mwana wa Udendu akupanga *uri*. Choncho opetula mvula a ku Umunneora anasankha kuti atsitse mvulayi lero n’cholinga choti asokoneze phwando la mnzawoyo. Sikuti amangokhutira ndi kudana ndi anthu a midzi ina kokha. Amadananso okhaokha. Kuipa kwawo kunafika potulutsa nyanga.”

“Zoon. Komanso kuipa kwawoko kuli ndi pakati moti kubereka mwana posachedwapa.”

“Simukunama. Mayi anga anachokera m’mudzi umenewu, koma ndikunenetsa pano kuti anthu a kwa mayi anga ndimawapenya mwamantha mpaka pano. Amayenda atasongoza mano awo. Nthawi zonse amangokhala ngati njoka mu udzu.”

Ifeme anadzuka kuti auyambe. Iye anali wamfupi, wojintcha ndipo anakonda kuyankhula mokweza kwambiri ngati akucheza ndi anthu ogontha. Anthu akamamva akuyankhula ankangoganiza kuti akukangana ndi munthu.

“Ezeulu, inetu ndiuyambe,” iye anayankhula mawu amenewa mokweza kwambiri moti azimayi omwe anali m’nyumba zawo kuseri anamva. “Tikuthokoza Ulu kuti palibe choipa chimene chakuchitikirani pa ulendo muna-yendawu. N’kutheka kuti mumtima mukunena kuti: ‘Ife-

me sanabwere kudzandiona, kapenatu n’kutheka pali chinthu pakati pathu?’ Ayi, palibe chifukwa chilichonse pakati pa Ezeulu ndi Ifeme. Nthawi yonsezi ndakhala ndikufuna kubwera ku Okperi kuti ndidzakuoneni. Kune-na zoonza zinangondivuta. Maganizo anga anali kwa inu, kungoti miyendo yanga ndi imene imatsalira m’mbuyo. Nthawi zina ndimadziuza kuti: ‘Ndipita mawa,’ koma tsiku lililonse ndimakumana ndi zolepheretsa. Kuteroko ndinali nditakonza kuti ndibwera kudzakuonani lisanafike tsiku la *Nno*. Koma taonani lero mwabwerako tsikulo lisanafike!”

“Inenso chimodzimodzi,” anatero Anosi. “Ndima-ngoti ndipita mawa, ndipita mawa, masiku n’kumathera kuchitseko. Ndimangokhala ngati mbululu yomwe inalephera kumera mchira chifukwa chomangonena kuti ndikubwera, ndikubwera!”

Ezeulu anasuntha nsana wake kuchokera kukhoma lomwe anatsamira ndipo ankaoneka kuti akuyang’ana kwambiri chidzukululu chake chachimuna, Amechi, yemwe ankaoneka kuti akuyesetsa kuti atambasure zala zachibakera chimene Ezeulu anakunga. Koma maganizo a Ezeulu anali adakali pa anthu ankayankhula aja, ndipo ankayankhula mawu amodzi kapena awiri akafuna. Kwa kanthawi, maso a Ezeulu anangoti dwii pa Ifeme. Kenako anamuthokoza chifukwa chobwera kudzamuona.

Amechi anapitirizabe kufuntha moti posakhalitsa anayamba kulira ngakhale kuti Ezeulu anatambasula zala zake zija kuti iyeyo asangalale.

“Nwafo, tabwera udzamutenge uyu ukamupereke kwa mayi ake. Ndikuganiza kuti kuliraku ndi tulo.”

Nwafo anabweradi ndipo anawerama ndi mawondo onse kwinaku akuperekera nsana wake kuti Amechi akweropo. Koma m’malo mokwera kumbuyoko, Amechi ana-

ngoima n’kumalira. Kenako anakunga kachibakera n’kumudinda Nwafo kunsana. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu omwe anali pamalowa ayambe kuseka ndipo Amechi anyamba kuyang’ana anthuwo misozi ikutsika m’masaya.

“Chabwino, basi zipita Nwafo. Mwanayu sakukufuna. Iweyo si munthu wabwino, akufuna Obiageli.”

Zimenezi ananenazi zinali zoona chifukwa Obiageli atabwera, Amechi anakwera kunsana kwake mosanyinyirika.

“Koma ana ena abale inu,” anatero anthu awiri kapena atatu nthawi yofanana.

Obiageli anadzuka movutikira kwambiri adakali chiweramire, kenako anamukankhira mumtunda Amechi pogwedeza chiwuno chake n’kumukankha ndi manja akhazikike kunsanako. Kenako anatuluka panja.

“Usamathamange naye ukhoza kugwa,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Musadere nkhawa,” anatero Anosi, “akudziwa zoyenera kuchita ameneyu.”

Obiageli analowera kumene kunali nyumba ya Edogo nyimbo ili pakamwa.

“Auze amayi mwana wawo akulira
 Auze amayi mwana wawo akulira
 Kuti amukonzere nsuzi wa *uziza*
 Kuti amukonzere nsuzi wa *uziza*
 Amupangire nsuzi wamadzimadzi wotsira tsabola
 Kuti mbalame zazing’ono zomwe zingaumwe
 Zife zonse ndi chidikhodikho
 Mbuzi yalowa munkhokwe
 Zilazi zonse zili pachiopsezo
 Tonde walowa munkhokwe
 Zilazi zonse zidibwa

Kodi waona mphalapala ikubwera apoyo
Taona! Yaviika mwendo umodzi m'madzi
Njoka yaluma mwendowo!
Kenako yathawitsa mwendowo m'madzimo
Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!
Iwe mphamba yoyendayenda
Takulandira kunyumba kuno
Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!
Koma kodi muyezo uli kuti?
Muyezo wachilundu changa uli kuti?
Ja—ja. Ja kulo kulo!"

Pa nthawi yonse yomwe anali ku Okperi, Ezeulu akamaganizira za Umuaro ankangoona kuti aliyense ndi mdani wake. Koma atabwerako anayamba kuona zinthu mosiyana. Iye anaona kuti anthu onse omwe anasiya ntchito zawo n'kubwera kunyumba kwake kuti adzamu-one, sankayenera kumawatenga ngati adani ake. Ena mwa anthu amenewa, monga Anosi, anali anthu osathandiza komanso okonda mabodza ndipo nthawi zina ankamudye-ra miseche. Anthu ngati amenewa ankayendera anzawo kuti awatole mkamwa. Komabe, anthuwa anali osiyana kwambiri ndi mdani wake yemwe anamulota m'maloto ali ku Okperi uja.

Pa tsiku lachiwiri, Ezeulu anawerenga anthu omwe anabwera kudzamuzonda, kuphatikizapo azimayi, ndipo onse anakwana makumi asanu mphambu zisani ndi ziwiri. Asanu ndi m'modzi mwa anthuwa anamubweretsera uchema. Mwamuna wa mwana wake, Ibe, limodzi ndi anthu akwawo anabweretsa mitsuko ikuluikulu iwiri ya uchema komanso tambala woti Ezeulu atsuke mkamwa.

Kwa tsiku lonselo, pakhomo pa Ezeulu pankangoti anthu pichitipichiti ngati pali phwando.

Anthu awiri kapena atatu anachokera ku Umunne-ora, mudzi wa adani ake uja. Pamapeto pa tsikulo, Ezeulu anagawa anthu a mu Umuaro m'magulu awiri. Anthu omwe ankamufunira zabwino komanso anthu ena omwe ankafuna kupasula midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro chifukwa cha kaduka. Ataganizira mozama zimenezi anaona kuti sangachite bwino kukhaulitsa anthu onse. Iye ankaona kuti kuli bwino angokambirana ndi adani akewo, mwina kupita kwawo n'kukawatchulira nkhwana zake. Iye ankaona kuti akhoza kunena mopanda kumangika kuti chala chimodzi ndi chimene chinakowa mafuta ndipo chinapaka zinzake. Koma kodi zinali zoyenera kuti akha-ulitse anthu onse kuphatikizapo amene anasonyeza kumuganizira pamene anali ku Okperi, kuphatikizapo amene ankabwera kudzamuona atabwerako?

Maganizo amenewa ankangoyendayenda m'mutu mwake moti mpaka patsiku lachitatu anali asanapangebe chosankha chake. Koma patsiku lachitatulo, yankho la nkhanayi linayamba kuonekera pamene mlendo wake womaliza, Ogbuefi Ofoka, yemwe anali m'modzi mwa anthu okhupuka mu Umuaro, anabwera kudzamuyendera. Kubwera kwake kunali kodabwitsa chifukwa sankakonda kuyendera Ezeulu. Ofoka ankadziwika bwino chifukwa chokonda kunena chilungamo popanda kupsatira mawu. Iye sanali munthu yemwe amayamba kutamanda winawake kokha chifukwa choti wamupatsa uchema. M'malo moti uchema umuphimbe m'maso, Ofoka sankatulutsa mwachangu nyanga yake yomwera uchema mpaka atamaliza kukhuthula zonse zomwe zili kukhosi kwake pozitichula ndi liwu limodzilimodzi. Pamapeto pake ankatulutsa nyanga yake n'kuupapira uchema wa munthuyo

mwankhanza zedi, moti zinkapezeka kuti munthuyo wafa pawiri.

“Ndabwera kuti ndidzakuuze kuti *Nno* komanso kuti ndidzathokoze Ulu ndi Chukwu chifukwa chokuyendetsa bwino kumene unapita,” iye anatero. “Ndikufuna kukuuza kuti mtima wa Umuaro unakhala pansi anthu atamva kuti wabwerako. Palibe amene wandituma kuti ndidzakuuze uthenga umenewu, koma ndikuganiza kuti ukufunika kudziwa zimenezi. Ndanena izi chifukwa ndikudziwa maganizo amene unali nawo usanapite ku Okperi.” Kenako anapuma kaye pang’ono, ndiyeno anasolola khosi lake n’kuyandikira Ezeulu mokhala ngati akufuna kumuluma khutu. Koma anachita zimenezi atakwinya nkhope yake. “Ineyo ndi m’modzi mwa anthu amene ndinali kumbali ya Nwaka wa ku Umunneora pamene ananena kuti upite ku Okperi kuti ukakumene ndi mzungu uja.”

Nkhope ya Ezeulu sinasintho ngakhale pang’ono. Iye anangokhala ngati chiboliboli.

“Wamva zimene ndanenazi?” anapitiriza Ofoka. “Ndinali m’modzi mwa anthu omwe ananena kuti tisasokoneze ubwenzi wanu, wa iweyo ndi mzungu uja. Ngati ukufuna ukhoza kundiiza kuti ndisadzapondenso pakhommo pako pano ndikangomaliza kuyankhula. Ndikufuna udziwe kuti akuluakulu a Umuaro samalimbana nawe pamene anakhala kumbali ya Nwaka. Tonse timamudziwa Nwaka komanso anthu omwe ali kumbuyo kwake. Komano n’chifukwa chiyani tinagwirizana ndi zimene ananena? N’chifukwa choti tinali titasokonezeka. Ukumva zimene ndikunenazi? Akuluakulu a Umuaro asokonezeka. Usakayikire zimene ndikukuuuzazi. Tonse tasokonezeka. Tikungofanana ndi galu yemwe ankayesa kuyankha anthu awiri n’kupezeka kuti wathyoka nsagwada. Choyamba,

iweyo Ezeulu unatiuza zaka zisanu zapitazo kuti si nzeru kumalimbana ndi mzungu koma ifeyo sitinakumvere. Tinapita kukalimbana naye ndipo iye anatenga mifuti yathu n'kuithyolathyola. Pamene paja tinadziwa kuti unkanena zoonza. Koma pamene tinkayamba kuphunzirapo kathu pa zimene tinalakwitsa, iweyo unatembenuka n'kutiuza kuti tipite kukalimbana ndi mzungu yemwe uja. Kodi umaye-mbekezera kuti ifeyo titani?" Anakhala kaye chete kuti Ezeulu ayankhe koma iye ankangokhala ngati mwala.

"Ngati mdani wanga akunena zoonza sindinganene kuti sindimumvera kokha chifukwa choti sindigwirizana naye. Zimene Nwaka ananena zija zinali zoonza. Iye anati: 'Pita ukayankhule ndi mzungu chifukwa umadziwana naye.' Kodi zimenezo si zoonza? Kodi ndi ndani pakati pathu amene akananyamuka kuno n'kukalimbana ndi mzungu monga mmene wachitiramu? Kachiwiri ndibwerezenso kuti, *Nno*. Ngati sunasangalale ndi zimene ndakuuzazi ukhoza kunditumizira uthenga n'kundiuzwa kuti ndisadzapondenso pakhomu pako pano. Basi ndapita."

Zimene ananenazi zinangowomba nkota nkhanu zomse zomwe zinkayendayenda m'mutu mwa Ezeulu kwa masiku atatu apitawo. N'kutheka kuti Akuebue akanayanakhula mawu amenewa, mawu ake sakanakhala ndi mphanvu ngati mmene anachitira ochokera pakamwa pa Ofo-ka. Koma popeza anachokera kwa munthu wapadera yemwe sanali mdani kapena mnzake, mawuwa anakhala olemerera.

Inde, zinali zoonadi kuti Mkulu Wansembe ankayenera kukalimbana ndi zoopsa zisanafike kwa anthu ake. Umenewu unali udindo wake monga wansembe. Zinthu zinkachitika choncho kungochokera pamene midzi isanu ndi iwiri yomwe inkazunzidwa ndi adani inanena kwa agogo a Ezeulu kuti: "Unyamula mulunguyu m'malo mwa

ife.” Poyamba ankachita mantha. Kodi nanga mphamvu zake akanazitumba kuti zoti anyamulire choopsa chamtundu umenewo? Koma anthu a mtundu wake ananena kuti sakhala yekha pa ulendowo. Choncho agogo akewo anasintha maganizo n’kuvomereza kuti asenza mulunguyo pamutu pawo. Iwo anaimirira ndipo pomwepo anasanduka mzimu. Anthu ake anapitirizabe kuimba kumbuyo kwawo ndipo iwo anapitirizabe kuyenda kupita chitsogolo, n’kuchititsa kuti masiku anayi afike powatsegulira njira.

Nkhani imeneyi inayamba kutentha m’maganizo a Ezeulu moti anaiika kaye pambali kuti maganizo ake akhale m’malo. Iye anaitana mwana wake Oduche.

“Kodi ukutani?”

“Ndikuluka dengi.”

“Tabwera kuno.”

Oduche anakhala pakama wozira moyang’anizana ndi bambo ake. Atakhala chete kwa kanthawi Ezeulu anyankhula ndipo anangolunjika pamfundo. Iye anakumbutsa Oduche ubwino wodziwa mzeru za azungu. “Ndinakutumiza kuti ukakhale maso anga kumene kuja. Osamvera zimene anthu akunena, anthu omwe amalephera kusiyanitsa dzanja lawo lamanja ndi lamanzere. Palibe bambo amene amanamiza mwana wake kapena kumuika khala lamoto m’manja. Ndinakuuzanso zimenezi, si choncho? Ngati munthu wina atakufunsa kuti n’chifukwa chiyani ukupita kukaphunzira mzeru za azungu, uziwauza kuti munthu amayenera kumavina mogwirizana ndi nyimbo imene ikuimbidwa.”

Kenako anawongola mutu wake ndipo anapitiriza kuyankhula motsitsa mawu. “Pamene ndinali ku Okperi ndinaona mzungu wina wachinyamata akulemba pogwiritsa ntchito dzanja lamanzere. Malinga ndi zimene ndinaona, sikuti amaganiza ngati munthu wamkulu. Koma ku-

ngoti ali ndi mphamvu. Iye amatha kundikalipira komanso amachita zimene akufuna. Ukudziwa chifukwa chake? Chifukwa choti amatha kulemba ndi dzanja lamanzere. N’chifukwa chake ndakuitana. Ndikufuna uphunzire n’ku-khala katswiri wa mzeru za anthu amenewa, n’kufika poti ngakhale utadzidzimuka kutulo ukhoza kulakatula zonse zimene amadziwa. Nawenso ukufunika kuphunzira mpaka utafika pomalemba ndi dzanja lako lamanzere. Basi, zimene ndinakuitanira ndi zomwezo.”

Pamene chisangalalo choti Ezeulu wabwera chinkayamba kuzirara, zinthu zinabwereranso mwakale pakhomo pa Ezeulu. Ana ankazungulira pakhomopo akuimba mokuwa zomwe anali atazisowa kwa mwezi wathunthu. “Tiuzeni nthano,” anatero Obiageli kwa mayi ake, Ugoye. Koma zoonza zake n’zakuti ndi Nwafo yemwe anamuuza kuti awapemphe.

“Ukufuna ndizikuuze nthano zinthu zili balalabalala chonchi?”

Nwafo ndi Obiageli anayamba kuchotsa zinthuzo nthawi yomweyo. Anachotsa mwisi womwe ankasinjira tsabola ndipo anakawuimika penapake kosinjirako ataku-lozetsa m’mwamba. Komanso anachotsa mphika n’kuka-wuika pathandala lansungwi. Ugoye anasintha chingwe cha koloboyi chomwe chinali chitatsala pang’ono kugwe-
ra mkati ndipo anaika chigwe china chonyowa ndi mafuta a gwalangwa.

Ezeulu anayeretsa mbale zonse za chakudya cho-mwe Ugoye anamupititsa madzulowo. Zimene anachitazi zikanachititsa mkazi aliyense kusangalala. Koma pakho-mo lalikulu ngati limeneli pankakhala zambiri zomwe zi-

kanachititsa kuti chisangalalo cha munthu chisapite patali. Kwa Ugoye anali mkazi mnzake, Matefi. Kaya Ugoye achite chabwino chotani, nsanje sinkamusiya Matefi m'pang'ono pomwe. Akaphikira nsima m'nyumba mwake, Matefi ankanena kuti akungozunza ana ndi njala kuti akagule zibangiri. Akaphikira panja kapena akapha nkhu-ku, ngati mmene anachitira madzulo umenewu, Matefi ankati akuchita zimenezo kuti mwamuna wake azimukonda kwambiri. N'zoona kuti sankanena zimenezi pamaso pa Ugoye. Koma mabodza onse omwe ankakawanena kumbali ankakazungulira n'kudzamupeza Ugoye.

Madzulo umenewu pamene Oduche ankawaula nkhu-ku pamoto, Matefi ankangoti zungulizunguli ataipitsa nkhope ngati waona galu wowola.

Atamaliza kuchotsa zinthu m'nyumba muja, Nwafo ndi Obiageli anayala mkeka ndipo anakhala pafupi ndi mpando wa mayi awo. “Mukufuna ndikuimbireni nthano yake iti?”

“Onwuero,” anatero Obiageli.

“Ayi,” anatero Nwafo, “nthano imeneyo tinatopa nayo. Bola mutifotokozere—”

“Chabwino,” anamudula mawu Obiageli. “Tiuzeni nthano ya Eneke Ntulukpa.”

Ugoye anakhala kaye phe-e n'kufufuza m'mutu mwake ndipo kenako anapeza nthano imene ankafuna.

Kalekalelo dziko likali nsoka, panali mwamuna wina yemwe anali ndi akazi awiri. Mkazi wamkulu anali ndi ana ambirimbi, koma wamn'gono anali ndi mwana m'modzi yekha. Ndiye tsiku lina bamboyo anatenga banja lake lonse n'kupita kumunda. Munda umenewu unali kumalire

a dziko la anthu ndi dziko lamizimu. Munthu aliyense amene ankapita kukalima malo amenewo ankafunika kuonetsetsa kuti kunja kusamudere ali komweko chifukwa mizimu inkabwera nthawi imeneyo kuti nayonso idzalime minda yawo. [Obiageli anayamba kuopa moti anasendera pafupi ndi mayi ake.]

Choncho bambo ameneyu limodzi ndi akazi ake komanso ana ake aja anagwira ntchito mpaka dzulo lina-yamba kulowa. Ataona kuti kunja kukuda, anasonkhanitsa makasu, zikwanje komanso madengu awo n’kunyamuka kumapita kwawo. Koma atafika kunyumba, mwana wa mkazi wamng’ono uja anakumbukira kuti waiwala chitoliro chake kumunda kuja ndipo ananena kuti akupita kuka-chitenga. Mayi ake anamuchonderera kuti asapite, koma iye sanamvere. Bambo ake anamuchenjeza kuti akapita kumeneko akhoza osakabwerako, koma sanawamverenso. Atatopa ndi kumuletsa anangomusiya ndi unkhutukumve wakewo.

Mwanayo anawoloka mitsinje isanu ndi iwiri, adutsanso nkhalango zinanu ndi ziwiri asanakafike kumunda kuja. Atayandikira anaona mizimu misana ili wera-wera ikubzala zilazi zawo. [Obiageli anasunthanso n’kuyandikira kwambiri mayi ake.] Mizimu ija inaweramuka n’kuona mnyamatayo ndipo inamukwiya koopsa.

“Ta-taonani mwana wa munthu!” anakuwa motero mtsogoleri wa mizimu ija. “Ukufuna chiyani kuno?” anapitiriza kuyankhulira m’mphuno. “Kodi sunayambe wauzidwapo kuti nthawi zino nafenso timakhala tikulima?”

“Ndabwera kudzatenga chitolilo changa chomwe ndinachiiwala pansu pa mtengo.”

“Chitoliro? Ukwanyitsa kuchizindikira ukachiona?”

Mwanayo anavomera. Kenako mtsogoleriyo anasandutsa chitoliro chagolide.

“Ndi chimenechi?”

Mwanayo ananena kuti ayi. Kenako anasandutsanso chitoliro china choyera ngati madzi akumwamba.

“Ndi chimenechi?” mtsogoleriyo anafunsanso, ndipo mwanayo ananena kuti ayi.

Pamapeto pake anasandutsa chitoliro chansungwi ndipo anamufunsanso ngati chinali chimenecho ndipo mnyamatayo anamwetulira n’kuvomera kuti ndi chake.

“Eko utiimbire.”

Mwanayo anatenga chitolirocho m’manja mwa mzimuwo ndipo anayamba kuimba: *Mizimu yoopsa inu, mizimu yosapusitsika ya kudziko lausiku! Bambo anandi-uza kuti munthu amene kumam’dera ali kuno amafa; “Chonde mwana wanga dikira mpaka m’mawa kutacha!” anatero amayi anga. Koma ine ndabwerabe kuno chifu-kwa cha kusamva. Kodi munthu angagone bwanji usiku wonse chitoliro chake chitatsala chokhachokha kumunda?*

Mizimuyo inasangalala kwambiri ndi nyimboyo moti inayamba kukuwa kuti haw-haw-haw kudzera mu-mphuno zawo. [Obiageli ndi Nwafo anayamba kuseka chifukwa cha mmene mayi awowo ankanenera kuti haw-haw-haw, akuyendetsa mutu wawo uku ndi uku.]

Kenako mtsogoleri wa mizimu ija anatulutsa miphika iwiri, wina waukulu wina waung’ono. Miphika iwiri yonseyo inali yomata kukamwa.

“Tenga mphika umodzi,” mtsogoleriyo anatero kwa mwana uja. Mwana uja anasankha mphika waung’ono.

“Ukakafika kunyumba ukaitane mayi ako ndi bambo ako, ndipo akakabwera ukautswe iwo akuona.” Mnyamatayo anathokoza mtsogoleriyo.

“Ukamapita kwanu, ukamva dum-dum uthawire m’tchire; ndipo ukamva jam-jam ubwererenso munsewu.”

Pamene ankapita, mwanayo anamva kulira kuti

dum-dum ndipo anathawira patchire. Kenako anamva jam-jam ndipo anatuluka n’kupitiriza ulendo wake. Iye anadutsa mitsinje isanu ndi iwiri komanso nkhalango zisanu ndi ziwiri, kenako anatulukira kwawo. Atafika anaitana mayi ndi bambo ake n’kuswa mphika uja pamaso pawo. Nthawi yomweyo pakhomu ponsepo panadzaza ndi zinthu zabwino zokhazokha monga miyala yagolide, nsalu, zakudya zamitundumitundu, ndalama, ng’ombe komanso zinthu zina zambiri zapamwamba.

Mayi a mwanayo anatenga mtanga wodzaza ndi mphatso n’kuutumiza kwa mkazi wamkulu wa mwamuna wake. Koma chifukwa cha nsanje anakana mphatsozo. Iye sankafuna kunyozeka ndi kamphatso kamene mnzakeyo anamupatsa m’malo moti nayenso angotumiza mwana wake kuti apeze zinthu zamtengo wapatali zofanana ndi za mkazi mnzakeyo.

Tsiku lotsatira anaitana mwana wake n’kumuuza kuti: “Tatenga chitoliro chako, lero tikupita kumunda.”

Palibe chimene ankapita kukachita kumundako moti ankangoyendayenda mpaka dzuwa kulowa. Kenako anati: “Basi tiye tizipita kunyumba.” Mwanayo anatola chitoliro chake chija ndipo mayi ake anamumenya pamutu n’kumuuza kuti: “Mwana wombwambwana iwe, kodi ukulephera ndi kuiwala chitoliro komwe?”

[Obiageli ndi Nwafo anaseka]

Choncho mwanayo anasiya dala chitoliro chake. Iwo anadutsa mitsinje isanu ndi iwiri komanso nkhalango zisanu ndi ziwiri ndipo kenako anafika kunyumba kwawo.

“Tsopano bwerera kuti ukatenge chitoliro chako chija!” anatero mayi uja.

Mwanayo anauza mayi akewo kuti sakufuna kubwerera kumundako, koma mayi akewo anamuimiriza ndipo anamuuza kuti akangoyerekeza kupita kumundako

n’kubwerera chimanjamanja popanda mphatso zochokera kwa mizimu amupha. Mwanayo anauyambadi ulendo ndipo anawoloka mitsinje isanu ndi iwiri komanso nkhalango zisanu ndi ziwiri. Kenako anafika kumunda kuja ndipo anapeza mizimu ili werawera kulima.

“Mpfi mpfi” mwanayo anafwenkha monyansidwa. “Ndikumva fungo lonyansa la mizimu.”

Mtsogoleri wa mizimu ija anamufunsa kuti wabwera kudzatani.

“Mayi anga andituma kuti ndidzatenge chitoliro changa. Mpfi mpfi.”

“Ungachizindikire chitolirocho utachiona?”

“Mukundifunsiranji funso limenelo?” anatero mwanayo. “Kodi munthu wanzeru zake angalephere kuzindikira chitoliro chake atachiona? Mpfi mpfi.”

Mzimuwo unauonetsa chitoliro chagolide ndipo nthawi yomweyo mnyamatayo ananena kuti ndi chime-necho.

“Chitenge kuti utiimbire,” unatero mzimuwo.

“Ndikukhulupirira kuti simunachilavulire,” anatero mwanayo, akuchipukuta ndi kuseri kwa dzanja lake. Kenako anayamba kuimba kuti: *Mfumu ya mizimu yonunkha mpf mpf, mizimu yakalekale yonunkha mpf mpf, mizimu ing’onoing’ono yonunkha mpf mpf, mizimu yaikazi yonunkha mpf mpf, mizimu yaimuna yonunkha mpf mpf*. Pame-ne ankamaliza kuimbako, mizimu yonse inangoti kukamwa yasa-a, zibwano zitatsala pang’ono kugunda pansi chifukwa chodabwa. Kenako mfumu yawo ija inatulutsa mitsuko iwiri, wina waukulu wina waung’ono.

Mzimuwo usanamalize ndi kuyankhula komwe, mwanayo analumphira mphika waukulu.

“Ukakafika kwanu ukaitane mayi ako ndi bambo ako ndipo kenako ukaswe mphikawu pamaso pawo. Uka-

mapita ukamva kuti dum-dum, uthawire m'tchire ndipo ukamva jam-jam utuluke n'kupitiriza ulendo wako.”

Mwanayo sanathokoze n'komwe. Anangonyamula mphika uja n'kumapita. Kenako anafika pamalo ena n'kumva kulira kuti dum-dum, koma iye anapitirizabe kuyenda pansewu paja akuyang'ana uku ndi uku kuti aone chimene chinkaliracho. Kenako anamva kuti jam-jam ndipo anathawira patchire.

Iye anadutsa mitsinje isanu ndi iwiri komanso nkhalango zisanu ndi ziwiri ndipo kenako anatulukira kwawo. Mayi ake omwe ankamudikirira panja pa nyumba, anasangalala kwambiri ataona mwana wawo akubwera ndi mphika waukulu kwambiri.

“Mizimuyo inandiuza kuti ndiswe mphikawu pamaso pa bambo ndi mayi anga.” Mwanayo anatero.

“Bambo ako chikuwakhudza n'chiyani? Iwowo ndi amene anakutuma?” Kenako mayiwo anatenga mphika uja n'kulowa nawo m'nyumba n'kutseka chitseko.

Atatero anatseka bowo lililonse la khumbi lakelo kuti pasapezeke kanthu kalikonse kabwino komwe kanga-tuluke n'kupita kwa mkazi wamng'ono wa mwamuna wake uja. Atamaliza ntchito imeneyi, anaswa mphika uja. Nthawi yomweyo mumphikamo munatuluka khate, mate-nda a nthomba, zithupsa komanso akwayauwotche ambirimbiri opanda maina. Zonyansa zonse zinadzaza m'khumbi lija ndipo zinapha mayiyo ndi ana ake onse.

M'mawa kutacha, anthu anadabwa kuona kuti palibe amene akutuluka m'khumbimo. Kenako mwamuna wake anakankha chitseko n'kusuzumira. Zimene anaona mmenemo zinali zokwanira kukomola munthu. Iye anayetsa kutseka chitsekocho mwachanguchangu kuti zonyansa zomwe zinali m'khumbimo zisatuluke. Mwamwayi anakwanitsadi kuchitseka. Koma matenda angapo ndi zo-

nyansa zina zinakwanitsa kutuluka m'khumbimo ndipo zinafalikira padziko lonse lapansi. Ndi mwayi wokhawokha kuti zoopsa kwambiri zomwe zinalibe maina zija zinatsala momwemo . . .

Ugoye, Nwafo ndi Obiageli anakhala moyandikana kwambiri pafupi ndi malo ophikira aja. Oduche anakhala chapambali pafupi ndi pakhomu lolowera kuchipinda chogona, atagwira buku lake latsopano, *Azu Ndu*. Anagwira bukulo molilozetsa kumene kunali lawi la nyali ija. Milomo yake inkagwewera pamene ankayesa kutchula mawu omwe ankawerenga movutikira kuchokera m'bukumomo:

A b a aba
E g o ego
I r o iro
A z u azu
O m u omu

Pa nthawiye Ezeulu anayambiranso kusinkhasinkha za adani ake aja, ndipo anayamba kuganiza modekha kwambiri kuti aone ngati zinali zotheka kuchita nawo mgwirizano kapena ayi. Maganizo ena anamubwerera akuti angosankha adani ake akuluakulu n'kuthana nawo, enawo n'kuwasiya. Iye ankaona kuti nkhondo yomenyana ndi adani akewo saiyanba kufikira nthawi yokolola, yomwe inali miyezi itatu m'tsogolo. Choncho nthawi inali idakalipo. Chifukwa cha nthawi imeneyi, iye anaona kuti ali ndi nthawi yoyeserera njira zinazo. Iye ankaona kuti angogwirizana nawo, kenako n'kusintha kuti angowakhaulitsa. Iye ankaona kuti si bwino kuchita zinthu mopupuluma. Munthu samaseteka zala zake mofulumira kwambiri ngati

kuti zikuthawa, kapena ngati wamva zoti akamaliza azisomeka kudenga. Amaziseteka modekha chifukwa ngakhale atasiya kaye, zikhalabe padzanja lake lomwelo ndipo akhoza kuzisetekanso nthawi ina. N’zoona kuti maganizo oti angogwirizana ndi adani akewo anali omveka ndithu. Komabe, Ezeulu ankafunika kusankha chimodzi m’malo momangosinthasintha maganizo.

“Ta! Nwanu!” anakuwa Ulu m’makutu mwake, monga mmene mzimu ungayankhulire kwa mwana wosamva. “Ndi ndani amene wakuuza kuti imeneyi ndi nkondo yako?”

Ezeulu ananjenjemera ndi mantha ndipo sananene kanthu.

“Ndanena kuti ndi ndani amene anakuuza kuti imeneyi ndi nkondo yako kuti uyambe kulinganiza njira zomenyera nkondoyi? Ukufuna kuteteza anzako omwe anakubweretsera uchema he-he-he-he-he, samala,” anaseka mulungu wake m’njira yomwe imasekera mizimu—mawu agwaa, omvekera m’mafupa. “Samala kuti usapezeke pakati pa anthu omwe ndikufuna kuthana nawo, chifukwa ukhoza kulandira chikwanje chomwe chimalunjika kwa wina. Kodi sumadziwa zimene zimachitika njovu ziwiri zikamamenyana? Pita kwanu ukagone, ndisiye ndithetse ndekha mkangano womwe uli pakati pa ine ndi Idemili, yemwe akufuna kundiwononga kuti nsato yake ikhalenso ndi mphamvu. Ndiye tandiuzza chimene chikukhudza pamenepa. Ndanena kuti pita kwanu ukagone. Koma kwa ineyo ndi Idemili timenyana mpaka ukweche, ndipo amene atagwetsedwe pansu ndi amene mikanda ya mu akakolo ake itadulidwe n’kuchotseredwa ulemu wonse.”

Pambuyo pa zimenezo panalibenso choti anene. Kodi Ezeulu anali ndani kuti aziuza mulungu wake njira

yoti amenyere nkondo ndi mulungu wansanje wansato yopatulika? Imeneyi inali nkondo ya mulungu. Iye ankangokhala ngati muvi m'dzanja la mulungu wake. Maganizo amenewa analedzeretsa Ezeulu ngati wapapira uche-ma. Maganizo enanso atsopano anakhuthuka m'mutu mwake ndipo ankangosinthanasinthana. Onse ankaoneka kuti ndi ofunika. Kodi n'chifukwa chiyani Oduche anatsekera nsato m'bokosi? Chipembedzo cha mzungu n'chime-ne chinalozedwa chala, koma kodi n'zoona kuti chinachititsadi n'chipembedzo chimenechi? Nanga bwanji ngati mwana wakeyo anali muvi m'dzanja la Ulu?

Bwanji ponena za chipembedzo cha azungu komanso azungu eniakewo? Zikanakhala bwino akanapanda kuganizira zimenezi n'komwe, koma popeza anali atazi-yamba kale anaganiza zotsata nkhani iliyonse mpaka kumchira. Inde, nanga bwanji azungu eni akewo? Ndipotu mzungu anakhala kumbali ya Ezeulu pa nthawi ina, komanso anakhala kumbali yake pomuchotsa kwawo n'kupita ku Okperi. Komanso anakhala ngati amupatsa chida choti amenyere adani ake.

Ngati Ulu anasankha mzungu kuti akhale kumbali yake kuyambira pachiyambi, zimenezi zikanavumbula zambiri. Zikanafotokoza chifukwa chimene Ezeulu anatumizira mwana wake Oduche kuti akaphunzire nzeru za mzungu. N'zoona kuti Ezeulu ankapereka zifukwa zosiyanasiyana potumiza mwana wakeyo, ndipo zifukwazo ndi zimene zinkabwera m'mutu mwake pa nthawiyo. Koma anaiwala kuti mbali ina ya thupi lake inali munthu, ndipo ina inali *mmo*—mbali imeneyi ndi imene ankaidetsa ndi choko choyera akamachita miyambo yofunika kwambiri. Zikuoneka kuti zambiri mwa zinthu zimene ankachita zinkachitidwa ndi mbali imeneyi.

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Anthu a ku Umuaro anali ndi mwambi womwe unkanena kuti, phokoso logonthetsa m'makutu la chochitika chapadera kwambiri liyenera kuyamba kuzirara ikamafika sabata ya msika wachiwiri. Zimenezi ndi zimene zinachitika ndi nkhani ya kuchoka komanso kubwera kwa Ezeulu. Kwa kanthawi, nkhani imeneyi inali mkamwamkwamwa. Koma mkupita kwa nthawi inazilala, moti inkangokambi-dwa mwa apa ndi apo ngati mmene zimakhallira nkhani zina zonse, ndipo nthawi zina anthu ankaikamba akalota.

Ngakhale pakhomu pa Ezeulu zinthu zinabwereranso mwakale. Mkazi wa Obika anali ataima. Ugoye ndi Matefi anapitirizabe kuchitirana nsanje yowawa ngati tsabola. Nayenso Edogo anayambiranso ntchito yake yosema, yomwe anaiimika kaye chifukwa cha ntchito yobzala mbewu kumunda. Oduche anapita patsogolo kwambiri kuchipembedzo chake chatsopano, ngakhale pa nkhani ya kuwerenga ndi kulemba. Nayenso Obika, atapumira kwa kanthawi, anabwereranso ku moyo wake wakale wa umbiyang'ambe, ndipo ulendo uno ankaumwa mpaka kutulukira m'makutu. Atangokwatira, Obika anasiya kaye kumwa uchema chifukwa ankadziwa kuti mowa si wabwino kwa munthu amene wangokwatira kumene. Ndiye popeza Okuata anali ali ndi nthunzi tsopano, sakanachitiranso mwina koma kukhala ngati galu yemwe wabwerera kumasanzi ake.

Ngakhalenso Ezeulu ankaoneka kuti waiwala mkwiyo umene anali nawo kwa adani ake. Palibe chimene chinkasonyeza zimenezi akamapereka nsembe ya tsiku ndi tsiku ya kola komanso mowa kwa mizimu yamakolo ake kapena akamachita mwambo womwe ankachita mwezi watsopano ukamatuluka. Tsopano inakwana nthawi yoti apereke mangawa kwa mkazi wake wamng'ono n'cholinga choti atenge pakati atakhala kwa chaka chathunthu kungochokera pamene mwana wake wongobadwa kumene anamwalira. Choncho nthawi ndi nthawi, Ezeulu ankailowera kukhumbi la Ugoye. Zimenezi zinangochititsa kuti ubwenzi wa Ugoye ndi Matefi ufike powawasa kwambiri. Matefi ankachitira nsanje Ugoye chifukwa iyeyo anali atadutsa msinkhu wobereka.

Zikondwerero zing'onozing'ono zomwe zinkachitika mkati mwa chaka zinachitikadi pa nthawi yake. Ina mwa miyambo imeneyi inkachitidwa ndi midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi, ndipo ina inkachitidwa ndi mudzi uliwonse pawokha. Mudzi wa Umuagu unkachita mwambo wa Mgba Agbogho kapena kuti *Kukangana kwa Adzakazi*; mudzi wa Umunneora unkachita mwambo wapachaka wolemekeza mulungu wawo Idemili, yemwe anali mwini wa nsato; midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi inkachita mwambo winanso wotchedwa *Oso Nwanadi* womwe unkaikonzedwa pofuna kuteta mizimu ya abale awo omwe anaphedwa kunkhondo.

Mvula yosakata inali itadula kaye, ndipo kadzuwa kanayamba kuwomba. Kadzuwaka kankathandiza kwambiri kuti zilazi ziyambe kuika. Popanda kadzuwa kame-neka, zilazizo zinkangofunga masamba akuluakulu ndipo pansi pake pankakhala popanda chilichonse. Mwachidule zonse zinkayenda bwino ngati sipanachitike kalikonse komanso ngati sipadzachitika chinachake.

Panali mwambo wina waung'ono womwe mudzi wa Ezeulu, Umuachala, unkachita chakumapeto kwa nyengo yamvula chikondwerero chachikulu chapachaka chomwe ndi Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano chisana-chitike. Chikondwerero chaching'onochi chinkatchedwa *Akwu Nro*. Pachikondwererochi pankachitika dzoma ndipo unali mwambo womwe azimayi amasiye ankapereka nsembe kwa azimuna awo omwe anatsogola. Mzimayi aliyense wamasiye ankaphika *foofoo* ndi ndiwo zotendera ndi nsinjiro pa usiku wa *Akwu Nro* ndipo akamaliza kuphika ankakaika zakudyazi panja pa khumbi lake. M'mawa kukamacha, mbale za chakudyacho zinkapezeka zopanda kanthu. Anthu ankakhulupirira kuti azimuna awo ankachoka kudziko la Ani-Mmo n'kudzadya chakudyacho.

Pa chikondwerero cha *Akwu Nro* cha chaka chino, pankayenera kuchitika chinthu china chapadera kusiyana ndi zaka zina, chifukwa anthu a msukhu wa Obika ankayenera kuyamba kuvala zinyawu zolemekezeka. Chochitika chimenechi chinkakhala chapadera kwambiri chifukwa anthu a m'gulu la achinyamatawo ankayamba kuvala zinyawu zolemekezeka kwambiri. Kwa masiku angapo tsopano, anthu a m'gulu la Otakagu ankanjoti zungulizunguli pokonzekera mwambowu. Anthu omwe ankatsogolera zochitika pamwambowu ankakhala pangosi yaikulu kwa anthu oipa mitima komanso akaduka, choncho ankayenera kuphikidwa m'mankhwala kuti pasapezeke wowa-seweretsa. Ngakhalenso ena omwe ankachita zinthu zina zosaonekera kwenikweni, ankayenera kudzitemera mankhwala odzitemeza.

Zinthu zonsezi zinkachitika mwachinsinsi ndipo chinsinsi chimenechi inkadziwa ndi mizimu yamakolo yokha basi. Chaposachedwapa chitetezo chinawonjezere-

dwa pofuna kuteteza chinsinsi chimenechi mu Umuaro. Pofika tsopano, zinali zoonekeratu kuti ngakhale kuti azi-mayi sankayankhula poyera akaona chinyawu, ankatha kudziwa munthu amene wabisala kuseri kwa chinyawu-cho. Iwo ankangofunika kuyang'ana anthu onse omwe anazungulira chinyawucho n'kuona amene panalibe. Kuti vuto limeneli lithe, akuluakulu a Umuaro analamula kuti akamatulutsa chinyawu cha gulu linalake, amuna a m'gulu kapena m'mudzi wake asamapezekepo. Nthawi zambiri ankasankha munthu wochokera mudzi wina.

Choncho anyamata onse a m'gulu la Otakagu a ku Umuachala anapita onse ku Umuogwugwu kuti akasankhe munthu woti avale chinyawucho. Munthu amene anasankha anali Amumegbu. Munthu ameneyu anali ku Umuachala pa nthawi yonse imene zokonzekera mwambowo zinkachitika, koma nkhanu imeneyinso inasungidwa monga chinsinsi.

Edogo ndi Obika ankachita chidwi kwambiri ndi chinyawu chomwe chinabweracho. Kuwonjezera pa kuti anali m'gulu la zaka zofanana ndi chinyawucho, ndi Obika ndi mnzake wina okha omwe anasankhidwa kuti akaphe nkhusa pamaso pa chinyawucho. Edogo anakhudzidwa ndi nkhanu chifukwa ndi iyeyo amene anasema chigoba cha chinyawucho.

Nthawi inali chakumadzulo. Obika anakhala m'khumbi lake, ndipo pakati pa miyendo yake panali mwala womwe ankanolerapo chikwanje chake. Madontho a thukuta ankatsetsereka pankhope yake ndipo anali atalu-ma mlomo wake wapansi pamene ankagwira ntchitoyi. Iye anali atagwiritsa ntchito kale mulu waukulu wa mchere ponola chikwanjecho kuti chithwe ngati lumu. Ndipo mwa apa ndi apo, ankapaka madzi amandimu pachikwanjecho n'kuyambiranso kuchinoletsa pamwala.

Makungu a mandimu awiri anali pansi pafupi ndi mwala uja, ndipo mandimu ena atatu kapena anayi anali atadulidwa kale. Obika anali atagwira ntchito yonola chikwanjechi kwa masiku atatu tsopano, ndipo chinali chitafika pakuthwa kwambiri moti munthu akanatha kumetera tsitsi lake. Kenako anadzuka n'kutuluka panja kuti akachione bwinobwino powala.

Atafika panjapo anachinyamula m'mwamba, ndipo akamachitembenuzira uku ndi uku chinkawala ngati kalilole chifukwa cha dzuwa. Iye ankaoneka kuti wakhutira ndi m'mene chathwera, moti anabwerera m'khumbi mwake muja n'kukachisunga pabwino. Kenako anatuluka n'kupita kuseri kwa nyumba yake ndipo anaona mkazi wake akupungula madzi kuchokera mumtsuko n'kumathira m'mbale. Kenako anaimirira mosonyeza kutopa kwambiri kwinaku akulavula mate monga mmene ankakonda kuchitira kwa masiku amenewo.

"Tachionani chinkhalamba," Obika anatero moseleula.

"Mesa ndi iweyo amene wachititsa kuti ndikalambe chonchi," mkaziyo anatero akumwetulira.

Sipanatenge nthawi yaitali kufikira pamene anthu anayamba kumva phokoso la mwambo uja m'mudzi wonsewo. Anthu asanu ndi m'modzi anayamba kuthamanga thamanga m'mbali zosiyanasiyana za mudziwo akuliza *ogene* n'kumafufuza chinyawu chija. Ankachita zimenezi chifukwa sankadziwa kuti chinyawucho chitululira pabowo lanyerere liti pa mabowo zikwizikwi omwe anali mu Umuachala monse. Iwo anapitirizabe kufufuza kwa nthawi yaitali kwambiri ndipo phokoso la zinganga zawo komanso mapazi awo linamveka paliponse. Dzuwa litangoyamba kupepa, anthu onse a m'mudziwo anakhamukira ku *ilo*.

Ilo wa ku Umuachala anali wamkulu kwambiri pa midzi yonse ya Umuaro, ndipo anali wooneka bwino kwambiri. Malo amenewa ankatchewa *Ilo Agbasioso* chifu kwa kukula kwake kunkathetsa mankhalu ngakhale anthu odziwa kuthamanga kwambiri. Pa imodzi mwa ngodya zake zinayi, panali nyumba yotchedwa *okwolo*, yomwe anthu amene analowa gule anaima akuyang'ana anthu akubwera ku *ilo* kuja kuti ateteze chinsinsi cha mizimu yamakolo.

Nyumba ya *okwolo* inali yaitali, inali yosiyana ndi makhumbi ena ndipo inali ndi makoma awiri a m'mbali ndi enanso kumbuyo. Akuluakulu a m'mudzi anakhala pamasitepe ena omwe anali pafupi ndi nyumbayi. Pamalowa ndi pamene munthu akakhalapo ankaona bwino kwambiri. Ndipo ena anakhala kumbuyo kwawo pamasitepe omwe aja. Kumbuyo kwa nyumba ya *okwolo* ija kunali mtengo waukulu wa *udala* womwe monga mwa mitengo yonse ya *udala* ya ku Umuaro, inali yopatulika kwa mizimu yamakolo.

Ngakhale pa nthawiya ana ambiri ankasewera pansipa mtengowu n'kumadikirira kuti zipatso zakupsa zikagwa atole. Zipatsozi zinali zotuwa ndipo chipatso chikangogwa mwana wodziwa kuthamanga kapena mwana wamwayi yemwe chagwera pafupi ankatola n'kuponya mkamwa. Mtengowu unali utadzaza ndi zipatso zopatsa chiyeso, koma palibe amene ankaloledwa kukweramo kuti akathyole, kaya mwana kapena wamkulu. Ngati munthu ataphwanya lamulo limeneli, zinyawu zonse za mu Umuaro zinkasonkhana kunyumba kwake ndipo munthuyo ankafunika kufufuza mapazi onse a zinyawuzo ndi chinapusa chachikulu komanso nsembe.

Ngakhale kuti Ezeulu ndi Akuebue analawira kumalowa, anapeza kuli chinyezi cha anthu. Munthu aliye-

nse wa ku Umuachala anali kumalowa, kapena anali m'njira. Komanso anthu ena anabwera kuchokera m'midzi ina ya Umuaro. Azimayi ndi atsikana, ana ndi achinyamata anali atakhala kale mozungulira bwalo la *ilo*. Pamene anthu ankabwera kuchokera mbali zosiyanasiyana za mudziwu, gulu la anthu anakhala mozungulira lija linayamba kuneneperaneneperabe ndipo phokoso linangoti buu. Panthawiyi panalibe mnyamata wochotsa anthu pakati pa bwalolo chifukwa chinyawucho chinali choti chipanga chokha malowo popanda kugwiritsa ntchito chikwapu. Kumbali ina ya khamu lomwe linali pamalowa kunamveka phokoso loopsa ndipo phokosolo linakolera pamalo onsewo. Anthu ankafunsa amene anayandikana nawo kuti ndi chiyani ndipo iwo ankaloza chinthu chinachake. Zala zosawerengeka zinayamba kuloza malo amodzi. Chakumeneko, chapangodya ina ya *ilo*, kunali kutakhala Otakekpele. Munthu ameneyu ankadziwika mu Umuaro monse monga munthu wokhwima kwambiri. Kwa maulendo oposa awiri, anatenga kola m'manja mwa munthu wakufa n'kumakana kuti iyeyo si amene wamupha. Iye anapuluka maula onse omwe akanamugwira ngati akanakhala kuti waphadi munthuyo ndi iyeyo. Koma anthu sankakhulupirira zimenezo. Ena ankanena kuti zimenezo zitangochitika anathamangira kunyumba kwake n'kukamwa mankhwala amphamvu kwambiri omwe anachititsa kuti asagwidwe.

Malinga ndi mmene anthu ankamudziwira komanso mmene anakhalira, anthu ankadziwiratu kuti sikuti wangobwera kudzaonera chinyawu chatsopanocho. Nthawi zambiri anthu okhwima chonchi anakonda kugwiritsa ntchito nthawi ngati imeneyi kuti ayeserere matsenga awo atsopano kapena kuti apikisane ndi nyanga za anzawo. Kunyamveka kuti chinyawu china chinatuluka chisanakonzekere.

ke bwinobwino ndipo chinachesulidwa moti chinadzikola n'kugwera pansi pamene chinkavina.

Koma n'kutheka kuti chomwe anthu ankakaikira kwambiri chinali mmene Otakekpele anakhalira. Iye anakhala ngati munthu wopuwala ndipo miyendo yake anai-pindira kumbuyo n'kuikhalira. Anthu ankanena kuti mmenemo ndi mmene nguluwe imakhalira ikamalimbana ndi kambuku. Nguluwe imafukula pansi pang'ono, ndipo imakwirira matakoni ake n'kuimitsa nyanga zake zachitsulo kuti kambukuyo angofikira paminga. Kambuku akangoona zimenezi amadziwa kuti zavuta ndipo amabwerera n'kumapita kwina kukasaka mbuzi kapena nk'hosa zopusa.

Anthu ankangomuyang'ana Otakekpele monyansidwa. Koma palibe amene analimbana naye chifukwa zinali zoopsa. Komabe, ankafunitsitsa wina atadzamukhaulitsa pomuchesula kuti ayaluke. Ngati gulu la Otakagu linasankha kutulutsa chinyawu chatsopanocho popanda kuchiphika m'mankhwala komanso kudziteteza mokwanira, kumeneko kukanakhala kupusa kwawo. Nthawi zambiri zochitika ngati zimenezi sizinkasonyeza wogonja pamankhwala chifukwa m'phamvu za amatsengawo zinkakhala zofanana ndipo nthawi zina anthu omwe atulutsa chinyawucho ankakhala ndi m'phamvu zochulukira kuposa yemwe akuwaputayo.

Kutulukira kwa chinyawucho kunatekesa aliyense. Azimayi ndi ana anabalalikira mbali zosiyanasiyana aku-kuwa mwamantha. Posakhalitsa anabwereranso chifukwa chinyawucho chinabwerera. Ndi kulira kwa *ogene* komanso kuimba kwa anyamata ochitsatira kokha komwe kunkamveka. Kulira kwa *ogeneyo* komanso kwa anyamatawo kunayamba kumveka kwambiri ndipo anthu omwe anali pamalowa ankayang'ana uku ndi uku kuti aone ngati njira yothawira idakalipo.

Anthu sanathawe kapena kudzidzimuka pamene gulu loyamba la zinyawu linalowa mu *ilo* kudzera pakampata kakang'ono komwe anthu anasiya chifukwa anthu ankaye-mbekezera kuti zinyawu zimenezi zituluka kaye nama-ndwayo asanatuluke.

Zinyawu zimenezi zinavala nkhwende zopangidwa ndi mankhwaule a mlaza ndipo zinali ndi zikwanje m'manja mwawo. Zikwanjezo zinkangoti waliwali pamene zinyawuzo zinkakweza manja awo popatsana malonje. Zinkayendetsa zikwanjezo kuchokera kumanja kupita kumanzere, kenako kuchokera kumanzere kupita kumanja. Zinkathamanga uku ndi uku, ndipo nthawi zina chinyawu china chinkathamanga kwambiri molowera mbali ina. Pamalo omwe chathamangirawo anthu ankabalalika n'kuthawa ndipo chinyawucho chinkaima mapazi ake akunjengemera ndi mphamvu za kaimidweko.

Kulira kwa *ogene* komanso kuimba kwa anyamata aja kunayambano kumvekera pafupi ndipo kuimbako kunangotsala pang'ono kumizidwa ndi phokoso la anthu omwe anali pamalowo. Zinali zoonekeratu kuti chinyawu chatsopano chija chaima kaye, apo ayi chikanakhala chitatuluka kale. Koma anyamata ochitsatira aja anapitirizabe kuimba nyimbo.

Chinthu choyamba chochititsa chidwi kunali kubwera kwa Obika ali ndi munthu woimba chitoliro kumbuyo wake. Khamu la anthu linayamba kusangalala, makamaka azimayi chifukwa Obika anali mnyamata wokongola motukwanitsa mu Umuachala, mwinaso titi m'midzi yonse ya Umuaro. Iwo ankamutchula kuti Ugonachomma.

Obika atangofika pa *ilo*, anaona Otakekpele atakhala ngati nguluwe. Popanda kuganiza kawiri, anathemangira kumene kunali munthuyo ndipo kenako anangoima chi.

Iye anakuwira munthu wokhwimayo n’kumuuza kuti anyamuke azipita kwawo. Koma munthuyo anangomwetulira. Khamu la anthuwo linayamba laiwala kale za chinyawu chatsopano chija. Okuata anakhala chakumbali kuti anthu asamamupanikize ndi pathupi anali napo paja. Mtima wake unazituka pamene anthu analonjera mwamuna wake. Pa nthawiyi anali atatseka maso ake ndipo anthu anathamanga momuzungulira.

Obika ankati kuloza Otakekpele kenako n’kudzaloza pachifuwa chake. Iye ankauza munthuyo kuti ngati akufuna kuchita zaphindu ndi moyo wake, kuli bwino anyamuke azipita kwawo. Koma mnzakeyo anapitirizabe kumangoseka.

Obika anapitirizabe kuthamanga kwake kuja. Iye ankathamanga ngati kambuku, chikwanje chili m’dzanja lake lamanja ndipo kudzanja lake lamanzere kunali lamba wachikopa.

Ezeulu anali ataluma milomo yake. “Ayenera ndi Obika,” iye anaganiza choncho, “mnyamata wopupuluma komanso wosakhwima m’mutu. Bwanji sanachite zimene anzakewo achita? Nawonso amuona Otakekpele koma angoyang’ana kumbali.”

Koma mwana wakeyo sanayang’ane kumbali. Maganizo a Ezeulu anaima pamene mwadzidzidzi Obika anagwetsa chikwanje chake, n’kuthamangira kutsogolo ndipo mofulumira kwambiri ananyamula Otakekpele kuchokera pamene anakhala paja n’kumuponyera patchire lina lapafupi ndipo panangoti fumbi koboo. Khamu lonse la anthu lija linayamba kusangalala kwambiri pamene linaona Otakekpele akukwawa kwinaku akuloza Obika yemwe anali atatembenuka kale. Okuata anatsegula maso ake ndipo kenako anapuma mowusa moyo.

Chinyawu chija chinatulukira anthu atapengeratu

ndi chisangalalo. Anthu anabalalikira mbali zosiyanasiyana ena akulira koopsa. Chinyawucho chinkathamanga n'kuima, ndipo chikathamanga pankamveka kulira kwa chinganga komanso maseche ochokera panganga yake ndiponso m'zibangiri zomwe zinali muakakolo ake. Thupi lake linali litavekedwa ndi nsalu zatsopano zamtundu wo-fiira ndi wachikasu. Nkhope yake inali yooneka yamphamvu komanso yoopsa. Pakamwa pake panatulukira mano awiri aatali ngati misomali. Maso ake anali aakulu ngati chibakera cha munthu. Pamutu pake panali nyanga ziwiri zomwe zinaloza kumbuyo. Chinanyamula chishango chachikopa komanso chikwanje chachikulu m'dzanja lamanja.

“*Ko-ko-ko-ko-ko-oh!*” chinyawucho chinaimba ndi mawu omveka ngati chitsulo chadzimbiri ndipo anyamata ochitsatira aja anayankha mokhala ngati akulira.

“Hum-hum-hum.”

“*Oh-oyoyo-oyoyo-oyoyo-oh: oh-oyoyo-oh. Hum-hum.*”

Zimenezi sizinkamveka ngati nyimbo kwenikweni. Ndipo mpake, chifukwa Agaba sichinali chinyawu chanyimbo komanso kuvina. Chinkaimira mphamvu komanso mkwiyo wa achinyamata. Kenako chinapitirizabe kumimba nyimbo yake ija, titero kunena kwake.

Pamene chinyawucho chinkafika pakati pa *ilo* chinasintha nyimbo ija n’kuyamba kuimba ina yotchedwa *Onye ebuna uzo cho ayi okwu*.

Nyimboyi inali ngati chilengezo kwa onse kuti pasapezeke munthu woyerekeza dala kuchiputa chinyawucho. Inkatchula mwatchutchutchu zimene munthu angakumane nazo ngati atanyalanyaza chenjezolo. Munthu wote-royo akanasanduka wotembereredwa; wopanda zala zakumanja komanso kuphazi; wokhala m'khumbi layekhaye-

kha; n’kunena kwina akanasanduka wakhate.

Pamene chinyawucho chinkapanga mavuvu n’ku-mathamanga kwambiri mosonyeza kuti chikufuna kupwete-ka munthu, anyamata awiri omwe anagwira chingwe chomwe anachimanga nacho m’chiwuno ankachikoka mwamphamvu kwambiri.

Zimenezi zinali zofunika kwambiri, ndipo inali ntchito yoopsa zedi.

Pa nthawi ina chinyawucho chinalusa kwambiri moti chinatembenukira amuna omwe ankachikokawo n’kuyamba kuwathamangitsa ndi chikwanje. Anthuwo ataona izi anataya chingwecho n’kuthawa kuti apulumutse miyoyo yawo. Pamene zimenezi zinkachitika, gulu la anthu omwe anali pamalowa linasokonezeka ndi mantha. Koma amuna awiriwo sanasiye chinyawucho kwa nthawi yaitali, moti chitangosiya kuwathamangitsa anatembenuka n’kukatolanso chingwe chija n’kumachikoka.

Pamene zimenezi zinkachitika panachitika zinazake zomwe anthu ambiri sakanazikumbukira zikanakhala kuti sizinatsatane ndi zochitika zoopsa zija. Mnyamata wina anaponya chikwanje chake m’mwamba n’kulephera ku-chiwakha. Anthu aja anali tcheru kuonetsetsa zomwe zinkachitika moti ataona kulepherako anayamba kumwooza. Mnyamatayo, Obikwelu, anatola chikwanjecho mwachanguchangu ndipo anayesa kuphimba kulephera kwakeko poyamba kuchita zinthu mwachangu kwambiri ndipo izi zinangochititsa kuti anthu amusekenso kwa mbiri.

Pa nthawiyi chinyawu chija chinali chitafika ku *okwolo* kuti chikapereke ulemu kwa akuluakulu a m’mu-dzi aja.

“Ezeulu de-de-de-de-dei,” chinatero chinyawucho.

“Bambo athu, ulemu wanga upite kwa inu,” Anaya-

nkha motero Mkulu Wansembe.

“Ezeulu, ukundidziwa ine?”

“Ayi. Kodi munthu angakudziweni bwanji inu ochokera kudziko lamizimu?”

“Ezeulu, chinyawu chikupereka ulemu kwa iwe,” chinyawucho chinayamba kuimba.

“*Eje-ya-mma-mma-mma-mma-mma-eje-ya-mma!*”

“Kodi waimva nyimbo ya Kangawude?”

“*Eje-ya-mma-mma-mma-mma-mma-eje-ya-mma!*”

Kenako chinyawucho chinaima mwadzidzidzi n’kutembenuka ndipo chinayamba kuthamanga pa liwiro loopsa. Khamu lomwe linali pamalopo linamwazikana n’kuthawa.

Ngakhale kuti Edogo akanatha kukakhala kumbuyo kwa akuluakulu omwe anakhala ku *okwolo* aja, iye anasankha kukaimirira limodzi ndi khamu la anthu lija kuti azitha kuona chinyawucho kuchokera kumbali zosiyanasiyana. Pamene ankamaliza kusema chigoba cha chinyawucho, sanakhutire nacho. Mphuno ya chigobacho sinkamukhuti-ritsa kwenikweni. Ankaona kuti anaisema mokhala ngati chigoba cha Agaba, osati cha Mzimu wa Adzakazi. Koma eni ake a ntchitoyo sananyinyirike pamene ankawapatsa ndipo anamutamanda kwambiri chifukwa cha ntchito yomwe anagwira. Edogo ankadziwa kuti akufunika kuona chigobacho chitavalidwa kuti aone ngati chinali bwinodi kapena ayi. Choncho pachifukwa chimenechi, anakakhala kugulu la anthu kuja.

Pamene ankayang’ana chigobacho chitavalidwa, mavuto ankawaona pamene ankachisema aja anaphimbika. Mphunoyo inkangochititsanso kuti nkhope ya chinya-

wucho izionekera patali. Edogo anapitirizabe kusuntha kuchokera mbali ina ya khamulo n'kupita mbali ina, kuti mwina angamve wina akuyerekezera chinyawucho ndi chinachake, koma palibe amene anatero. Anthu ambiri ankatamanda chinyawu chatsopanocho, koma palibe amene anaganiza zochiyerekezera ndi chinyawu chotchuka cha Agaba wa ku Umuagu. Anthuwo akanachita zimenezi, Edogo akanasangalala kwambiri.

Iye anaoneratu kuti sanafike pomapikisana ndi katswiri wosema wa mu Umuaro, ndipo ankalakalaka atakhala katswiri ngati munthuyo. Kenako iye anayamba kudziimba mlandu kuti sanakakhale pa *okwolo* uja.

Pamalo amenewo, pakati pa akuluakulu aja, m'pamene akanamva zambiri zokhudza zimene ankafuna kumvazo.

Koma tsopano anali atachedwa moti zinali zosatheka kukakhalaponso.

Chikondwererocho chinafika pampondachimera pamene nthawi inafika yoti aphe nkhusa. Pamene anthu ankapititsa mpando woti chinyawu chija chikhalire pakati pa *ilo*, pamalowo panali bata lokhalokha.

Anthu awiri anapita pambali pa chinyawucho n'kuyamba kuchikupizira. Nkhosa yoyamba inapititsidwa kutsogolo kwa chinyawu chija ndipo chinagunda khosi la nkhusayo ndi chikwanje chake. Kenako nkhusayo inakokedwera chapataliko, pomwe chinyawucho chikanatha kuona bwinobwino. Bata lija linali litawonjezeka kwambiri ndipo phokoso lomwe linkamveka linali la kulira kwa chitoliro chomwe chinkamveka mokhala ngati achigwira pakhosi. Obika anapita kutsogolo ndipo anaponya chikwanje chake m'mwamba. Chikwanjecho chinazungulira maulendo angapo chikung'anima ndi kuwala komwe kunali madzulowo. Iye anachita zimenezi maulendo awiri ndipo

maulendo onsewa anachiwakha chisanagwere pansi. Kenako anapita panali nkhoa paja n'kuikhapa mwamphamvu moti mutu wa nkhoayo unathothokera pansi. Khamu la anthu lija linayamba kukuwa mosangalala pamene muntu wina ankapita kukatola mutu wankhoayo, womwe unali utagwera pamchenga ndipo atautola anauimika m'mwamba. Chinyawu chija chinayang'ana mutuwo mokhala ngati chilibe dzimvo.

Pamene phokoso lachisangalalo lija linkachepa, nkhoa yachiwiri inabweretsedwa pabwalo paja ndipo chinyawu chija chinakhudzanso khosi la nkhoayo ndi chikwanje chake. Obikwelu anapita kutsogolo. Iye anali ndi mantha chifukwa chogwetsa chikwanje chake ulendo wapita uja. Ndiyeno anaponyera chikwanjecho m'mwamba maulendo awiri, koma ulendo uno anachiwakha bwino. Kenako anapita chapatsogolo, kutukula mkono wake n'kuikhapa koma zinkangokhala ngati wakhapa mwala. Nkhosa ija inayamba kuphuphaphupha kuti ithawe. Khamu la anthu lija linayamba kumuwooza komanso kumuseka kwambiri. Obikwelu anachita tsoka patsikuli. Pamene ankati azikhapanso, nkhoayo inali itasuntha mutu wake moti iye anakhapa nyanga yake. Chinyawu chija sichinasinthe mayang'anidwe ake ngakhale chinaona zopepela zomwe ankachitazi. Obikwelu anayesanso ndipo anakhapa khosi la nkhoayo mutu wake n'kugwera pansi. Atachita izi, kuseka kuja kunachepa ndipo ena owerengeka anayamba kumuchimerera.

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Tsopano nthawi yokwanira inali itadutsa Ezeulu akukonzekera kukhaulitsa adani ake. Iye ankafuna kukhapa Umuaro pa nthawi yomwe amakhala wofooka kwambiri, pomwe ndi pa Chkondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano.

Chikondwerero chimenechi chinkasonyeza kuyamba kwa chaka chatsopano. Chikondwererochi chisanachitike, munthu ankaloledwa kukumba zilazi zomwe anabzala pakhomu pake kuti ana ake asafe ndi njala. Koma palibe amene ankaloledwa kukolola minda ikuluikulu. Ndipo kwa anthu omwe anali ndi mipando yaulemu, sankayenera kulawa chilazi chatsopano chikondwererechi chisanachitike. Zimenezi zinkakumbutsa midzi isanu ndi umodzi ya Umuaro kuti anachita mgwirizano kale kwambiri, ndipo ankayenera kupitirizabe kumvera Ulu yemwe anawapulumutsa kunkhanza za anthu a ku Abam. Pa chikondwereo chilichonse cha zilazi zatsopano, anthu ankachita mwambo woyerekezera zimene zinachitika pamene midziyi inkachita mgwirizano ndipo mwamuna aliyense wamkulu ankayenera kutenga chilazi chimodzi n'kupita nacho kukachisi wa Ulu. Akafika kumeneko ankaika chilazicho pamulu wamudzi wake pambuyo poti wazunguliza chilazicho pamutu wake maulendo angapo. Kenako ankatinga choko chomwe chinali pambali pa mulu wa zilazizo n'kupaka pankhope yake. Akuluakulu a mudzi uliwonse ankadziwa chiwerengero cha amuna a m'mudzi wawo

powerenga zilazi zimenezi. Ngati pali kuwonjezeka kwa amuna m'mudzi, akuluakuluwo ankapereka nsembe yothokoza kwa Ulu. Koma chiwerengerocho chikatsika, akuluakuluwo ankapita kwa woombeza n'kukamufunsa kuti chachititsa n'chiyani ndipo akachipeza ankapereka nsembe yopepesa. Ndi pa milu yomweyi pamene Ezeulu ankasankha zilazi khumi ndi zitatu zomwe ankadya mwezi ulionse mpaka chaka china chatsopano.

Zikanakhala kuti mwambowu unkangothera pamenepa, ndiye kuti ukanakhala wofunika kwambiri kwa anthu a ku Umuaro. Koma zoonza zake ndi zakuti patsikuli ndi pamene anthu a m'midzi yonse ankachita mwambo wolemekeza milungu ya midzi yawo.

Patsikuli mulungu aliyense ankabweretsedwa ndi wansembe wake, akuvina mozungulira ndipo onse ankaima pakhomu lolowera kukachisi wa Ulu. Ina mwa milunguyi inali yakutha kwambiri moti inali itayandikira nthawi yoti chiboliboli china chisemedwe, mphamvu zake n'kusamutsidwira m'chatsopanocho. Zikatero chakalecho chinkataidwa. Ina inali yatsopano chifukwa inali yoti yangosemedwa chadzulo lake. Milungu yakutha ija inali itanyamulidwa ndi zinyawu zofanana ndi amene anaisema kalekalelo, pa nthawi imeneyo anthu a ku Umuaro asansiye mwambowu. Pa chikondwerero cha chaka chatha panali milungu yakale kwambiriyi itatu yokha basi.

N'kutheka kuti pamwambo wachaka chino, mulungu m'modzi kapena iwiri yomwe inali yakutha komanso yakale kwambiriyi ikanachotsedwa n'kutsatira anthu amene anaisema omwe anali analowa m'nthaka zaka zambiri zapitazo.

Mwambowu unkabweretsa milungu komanso anthu pamalo amodzi. Unali mwambo wokhawo womwe anthu a ku Umuaro ankati akatembenukira uku n'kuona mnzawo

yemwe amakhala naye pafupi ndipo akatembenukira kwinaku n'kuona mulungu wawo, mwina Agwu yemwe mayi ake anabereka misala, kapena Ngene, yemwe anali mwini wake wa mitsinje.

Ezeulu anali atapita kwa Akuebue pamene anthu omuthandizira asanu ndi m'modzi aja ankafika kunyumba kwake. Matefi anawauza kuti Ezeulu wachokapo ndipo anthuwo anaganiza zomudikirira mu *obi* wake.

Pamene Ezeulu ankabwerako, dzuwa linali likupita kukalowa. Ngakhale ankadziwa zimene anthuwo anabwerera, iye ananyengezera kudabwa.

"N'kwabwino koma?" Ezeulu anafunsa anthuwo atawapatsa malonje oyambirira.

"N'kwabwino."

Kenako onse anangoti phee. Patapita kanthawi, Nwosisi yemwe ankaimira mudzi wa Umuogwugwu anayankhula.

Iye sankataya nthawi ndi kumazungulira poyankhula.

"Mwafunsa kuti n'kwabwino ndipo ife tanena kuti n'kwabwino. Koma mbululu simathawa masanasana ngati sinaone chinthu chomwe chikuika moyo wake pangozi. Pali nkhani ina imene taganiza zoti tiibweretse kwa inu. Monga mukudziwira, pofika lero patha masiku anayi kungochokera pamene mwezi watsopano unaonekera kumwambaku. Mweziwo wakula ndithu, koma inuyo simunatiitane n'kutiuza tsiku la Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano."

"Malinga ndi mmene tikudziwira," Obiesili anapitiriza, "Mwezi watsopanowu ndi wakhumi ndi chiwiri ku-

chokera pamene tinachita chikondwerero chapita.”

Aliyense anangoti phee. Obiesili sanali munthu wodziwa kusankha mawu poyankhula ndipo palibe amene anamuuzza kuti aikepo mlomo pa nkhani yovuta ngati ime-neyo. Ezeulu anatsukuluza kukhosi kwake ndipo analonje-ranso anthuwo kachiwiri pofuna kuwasonyeza kuti sana-tekeseke ndi kubwera kwawo.

“Sindingakuimbeni mlandu chifukwa mwachita zi-mene mumayenera kuchita,” iye anatero. “Ngati panga-pezeke munthu amene anganene kuti mwalephera kugwira ntchito yanu, ameneyo ndi mfiti. Komanso munthu amene amafunsa mafunso samasochera, zimenezi ndi zimene makolo anthu ankatiuza. Mwachita bwino kubwera kuti mudzandifunse za nkhani imene ikukusowetsani mtende-reyi. Koma pali chinthu chimodzi chimene chikundivuta kumvetsa. Iweyo Obiesili wanena kuti malinga ndi mmene ukudziwira ndimayenera kulengeza za Phwando la Zilazi Zatsopano mwezi wapitawo.”

“Inde ndinaterodi.”

“Kani? Ndimayesa ndinakumva molakwika. Koma funso langa ndi lakuti, unayamba liti kudziwa nthawi yoyenera kulengeza chaka chatsopano ku Umuaro?”

“Obiesili wangoyankhula mophonya,” anatero Chukwulobe. “Ifeyo sitidziwa nthawi yoyenera kulengeza chaka chatsopano mu Umuaro chifukwa si ife akulu anse-mbe. Koma timangoganiza kuti mwasokonezeka kuwerengera masiku chifukwa cha kuchoka munachoka kuja.”

“Wati bwanji? Koma mutu wako umagwira mnyamata iwe?” anakalipa motero Ezeulu. “Koma masiku ano tiona malodza ndithu. Kulephera kuwerengera masiku ineyo? Kodi bambo anu anakuuzani kuti Mkulu Wansembe wa Ulu amavutika kuwerengera miyezi? Zimenezo sizinachitikepo,” iye anapitiriza kuyankhula chapansipansi, “pa-

libe Ezeulu amene angasokonezeke pa nkhani yowere-
 ngera masiku. Mwina ndi inuyo amene mumawerengera
 masiku ndi zala zanu omwe mukhoza kulakwitsa kapena
 kuiwala. Inuyo mukhoza kuiwala chala chimene muna-
 werenga mwezi watha, koma osati ineyo. Komabe monga
 ndinanenera kale, mwachita bwino kubwera kudzafunsa.
 Bwererani kumidzi yanu ndipo muzidikira uthenga wo-
 chokera kwa ine. Sindifunikira munthu wina kuti azindi-
 uza mmene ndingamagwirire ntchito yanga.”

Munthu wina akanalowa m’khumbi mwa Ezeulu
 anthu aja atangochoka akanadabwa kwambiri. Nkhope ya
 wansembe wachikulireyu inali itawezuka ndi chisangalalo
 ndipo inayamba kuwala ngati mmene inkaonekera ali
 mnyamata. Milomo yake inkagwedera ndipo chapansipa-
 nsi pankamvera mawu. Koma posakhalitsa anamva mawu
 ena kuchokera panja ndipo anakhala kaye chete. Iye ana-
 siya kuyankhula chapansipansi n’kumvetsera mwatcheru.
 Nwafo ndi Obiageli ankaimba nyimbo inayake panja pa
obi wake.

“*Eke nekwo onye uka!*” iwo ankaimba mobwere-
 zabwereza. Ezeulu anapitirizabe kumvetsera mwatcheru
 kwambiri ndipo anazindikira kuti samamva molakwika.

“*Eke nekwo, onye uka! Eke nekwo onye uka! Eke
 nekwo onye uka!*”

“Taona chikuthawatu!” anatero Obiageli ndipo iye-
 yo ndi mchimwene wakeyo anaseka kwambiri.

“*Eke nekwo, onye uka! Eke nekwo onye uka! Eke
 nekwo onye uka!*”

“Nwafo!” anakuwa Ezeulu.

“Nna,” anayankha Nwafo mwamantha kwambiri.

“Tabwera kuno!”

Nwafo anatulukira akuyenda mosamala kwambiri
 moti ngakhale akanaponda nyerere sikanafa. Thukuta lina-

li likutsika pankhope yake.

Obiageli anali atazimiririka atangomva bambo akewo akuitana Nwafo.

“Umanena chiyani panjapo?”

Nwafo sanayankhe. Iye ankangophethira ngati nyani wogwidwa pamsampha.

“Kodi ulibe makutu? Ndakufunsa kuti umanena kuti chiyani?”

“Anthu akumati imeneyo ndi njira yothamangitsira nsato.”

“Ine sindinakufunse kuti undiuze zimene anthu ena akumanena. Ndakufunsa kuti undiuze zimene umanena. Kapena ukufuna uyankhe funso langali chikwapu chili m’manja?”

“Timanena kuti: *Nsato thawa iwe! Pakhomo pano pali Mkhristu.*”

“Ndiye chinakudzera n’chiyani kuti uziimba nyimbo imeneyo?”

“Akwuba anatiuza kuti nsato imathawa ikangomva mawu amenewo.”

Ezeulu anayamba kuseka ndipo anachita zimenezi kwa nthawi yaitali zedi.

Nwafo anamvako bwino ataona bambo akewo atafa nawo nseko.

“Ndiye nsatoyo inathawa itamva mawu amenewo?”

“Inde, inayamba kuthawa mofanana ndi njoka zina zonse.”

Nkhani yonena kuti Ezeulu wakana kutchula tsiku lochita Phwando la Zilazi Zatsopano inafala mu Umuaro monse ndipo inafala mwansanga ngati yayenda ndi mphepo. Ina-

mveka patali ngati yachita kutumizidwa ndi *ikolo*. Poyamba anthu ankadabwa akamva nkhanayi. Ngakhale zinali zisanachitikepo ndi kale lonse, anthu anayamba kumvetsa chifukwa chake.

Patatha masiku awiri, anthu khumi a mipando yaulemu anatulukira kunyumba kwa Ezeulu. Pa gulu la anthu a mipandowa, onse anali ndi mipando yosachepera itatu ndipo m'modzi wa iwo, Ezekwesili Ezukanma, anali atalandira mpando waulemu wachinayi womwe unali waukulu kwambiri komanso womaliza. Panalinso anthu awiri ena m'midzi yonse isanu ndi umodzi omwe anali ndi mipando yapamwamba ngati imeneyi. Wina anali wachikulire kwambiri moti sakanatha kubwera, ndipo wina anali Nwaka wa ku Umunneora. Kubwera kwa anthu a mipandowa kudzagwira mwendo wa Ezeulu, kunkasonyeza kuti asowa pogwira.

Onse anabwerera limodzi, ndipo zinali zoonekeratu kuti anali atagundana kale mitu asanabwere kunyumbaku. Aliyense asanalowe m'khumbi la Ezeulu, ankabaitsa ndondo yake yachitsulo pabwalo ndipo ankavula chisoti chake chofiira n'kuveka ndodoyo.

Pa nthawi yonse yomwe ankakambirana, palibe munthu wina amene anabwera pafupi kwambiri ndi khumbilo moti n'kumva zimene ankakambirana. Anosi yemwe ankafuna kupita kwa Ezeulu kuti akatapeko mabodza, anatuluka m'nyumba mwake atanyamula fodya wofwenkha ndipo anadabwa kuona ndodo zachitsulo zovokedwa zipewa zili panja pa nyumba ya Ezeulu. Kenako anatembenuka n'kupita kunyumba ina yapafupi.

Ezeulu anaonetsa amuna amipando aja choko ndipo aliyense anatenga chokocho n'kujambula pansi mizere yoima komanso yogona. Ena anapakanso chala chamanthu chakuphazi, pomwe ena anapaka kuzungulira diso

lawo limodzi. Kenako anawabweretsera kola mutatu m'mbale yogoba. Anthu amipandowo anayamba kucheza koma sanacheze kwa nthawi yaitali. Ezeulu anatola kola m'modzi, Ezekwesili nayenso anatola kola wachiwiri ndipo Onenye Nnanyelugo anatola kola wachitatu. Aliyense anapereka pemphero lachidule ndipo kenako anaswa kola wake.

Nwafo anatenga mbale yogoba ija n'kuiyendetsa kwa anthu atatuwo ndipo aliyense ankaponyamo mtedza womwe anaswa asanasankhepo umodzi. Mtedzawo utaponyedwa m'mbalemo, Nwafo anaiyendetsa kwa ena onse ndipo aliyense anatola mtedza umodzi.

Atamaliza kutafuna mtedzawo, Ezekwesili Anayankhula.

“Ezeulu, atsogoleri a Umuaro omwe asonkhana pano andituma kuti ndikuthokoze chifukwa cha kola amene wawapatsa. Chonde uzigona kutali ndi moto ungapse. Sitikufuna ufe msanga kuti udzatipatsenso kola wina mawa. Chifukwa cha chikondi wasonyezachi, nkhokwe zako zisefukire ndi zakudya.”

Ena aja anavomereza nawo n'kunena kuti: “Zoonadi, nkhokwe zakodi zisefukire.”

“Mwina wadziwa kale nkhani yomwe tabwerera. Ndi nkhani yokhudza mphekesera ina yomwe yatipeza. Ndiye titakhala pansu tinaona kuti tibwere kuti tidzamve mvemvemve kuchokera pakamwa pako. Nkhani imene tamva ndi yoti pali mavuto ena pa nkhani ya tsiku lotsatira la Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano. Monga tanenera, ife sitikudziwa ngati nkhanayi ndi yoona kapena ayi. Koma chomwe tikudziwa ndi choti anthu mu Umuaro monse akuchita mantha komanso ali ndi nkhuwa kuti mphekesera imeneyi ikhoza kusokoneza zinthu. Ndiye ife sitingankhala n'kumangoyang'ana zimenezi zikuchitika. Munthu

wamkulu samangokhala n’kumangoyang’anira mbuzi yai-kazi ikuvutika ndi kubereka. Kodi atsogoleri a Umauro, ndayankhula zogwirizana ndi zimene mwandituma?”

“Inde, mawu ndi omwewo ndithu.”

“Ezekesili,” anatero Ezeulu.

“*Eei*,” anayankha munthu yemwe anali atangomaliza kumene kuyankhulayo.

“Ndakulandirani. Musamangike ayi. Mawu anuwo ndawamva. Egonwanne.”

“*Eei*.”

“Nnanyelugo.”

“*Eei*.”

Ezeulu anatamula anthuwo ndi maina awo.

“Nonsenu ndakulandirani ndi manja awiri. Cholinga chimene mwabwerera ndi chabwino ndipo pachifukwa chimenechi ndikukuthokozani kwambiri. Koma ineyo sindinamve kuti pali mavuto ena okhudza tsiku lotsatira la Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano. Anthu omwe amandithandiza anabwera masiku awiri apitawo ndipo anandiuza kuti ndilingeze tsiku loti tidzachite chikondwererochi. Ineyo ndinawauza kuti si udindo wawo kundi-kumbutsa zimenezi.”

Ezekwesili anali ataweramitsa mutu wake ndipo ankasisita dazi lake. Ofoka anali atatulutsa fodya wake wofwenkha kuchokera m’chikwama chake chachikopa chambuzi ndipo ankamukhuthulira pachikhatho chake. Nnanyelugo yemwe anakhala pafupi naye, anasasa manja ake ndipo kenako anatambasura dzanja lake kuti Ofoka amugawireko fodyayo ndipo pamene ankachita zimenezi sananene chilichonse. Ofoka anagawira mnzakeyo fodya yemwe anali m’chikhatho chake. Kenako anapungulanso fodya wina kuchokera m’botolo muja n’kuwonjezera yemwe anatsala pachikhatho paja kuti nayenso afwenkhe.

“Koma kwa inuyo,” anatero Ezeulu. “Sindikufunika kumayankhula nanu mozimbaitsa kapena mwazining’a. Nonse mukudziwa bwino mwambo wamakolo athu. Ineyo ndimatchula tsiku la phwando ndikatsala ndi chilazi chimodzi chokha basi. Pofika lero ndidakali ndi zilazi zitatu ndipo ndikudziwa kuti tsiku loti ndilengeze za tsiku la chikondwererochi silinafike.”

Atatu kapena anayi mwa alendowo ankafuna kuyankhula nthawi imodzi, koma enawo anapereka mpata kwa Onenye Nnanyelugo. Iye anapereka ulemu kwa onse asanayambe kuyankhula.

“Ndikuganiza kuti Ezeulu wayankhula bwino. Zonse zimene wanena zalowa m’makutu mwangamu. Tonse timadziwa bwino miyambo yathu ndipo palibe amene anganene kuti Ezeulu wachita chilichonse cholakwika. Komabe, zilazi zakwima munthaka ndipo tikuyenera kuzikolola zisanayambe kuwonongeka. Koma pa nthawi yomweyo, Ezeulu watiuza kuti watsala ndi zilazi zitatu zoti adye. Ndiye pamenepa tipange bwanji? Kodi timanyamula bwanji munthu amene wathyoka mafupa a m’chiwuno? Tonse tikudziwa chifukwa chake zilazi zopatulikazo sizinathebe kufikira lero. Zimenezi wachititsa ndi mzungu. Koma iyeyo sali pano kuti apume nafe limodzi mpweya umene waipitsawu. Sitingapite ku Okperi n’kukamuuza kuti abwere n’kudzadya zilazi zikutilepheretsa kukololazi. Ndiye kodi ifeyo tingokhala pansi n’kumangoyang’ana ana komanso akazi athu akufa ndi njala? Ayi! Ngakhale kuti si ine wansembe wa Ulu, ndikudziwa kuti mulungu wathuyu sakufuna kuti tiwonongeke. Pajatu ife timamutichula kuti mpulumutsi wathu. Choncho, pempho lathu ndi lakuti inuyo Ezeulu mupeze njira yoti mutithandizire. Zikanakhala zotheka, ineyo ndikanapita n’kukadya zilazi zotsalazo. Koma ineyo si wansembe wa Ulu. Ndi iweyo

Ezeulu amene ungathe kutipulumutsira zokolola zathu.” Ena aja anayankhula chapansipansi posonyeza kugwirizana nazo.

“Nnanyelugo.”

“*Eei.*”

“Wayankhula bwino kwambiri. Koma zimene ukundiuzazi ndi zosatheka. Zilazi ukunenazo si zakudya ndipo munthu samazidya chifukwa choti ali ndi njala. Iweyotu ukundiuzza kuti ndidye imfa.”

“Ezeulu,” anatero Anichebe Udeozo. “Tikudziwa kuti zimenezo sizinayambe zachitikapo, koma tiyenera kukumbukiranso kuti mzungunso sanayambepo watenga Mkulu Wansembe n’kupita naye kwina. Masiku ano zinthu zasintha kwambiri ndipo tiyenera kudziwa zochita zoterezi zikatigwera. Apo ayi anthu atitsira dothi m’khutu. Ndikufuna uyang’ane bwinobwino m’khumbi muno kuti uone. Kodi pali munthu wina wa mu Umuaro yemwe mulibe muno?”

“Ayi, inuyo ndiye Umuaro,” anatero Ezeulu.

“Inde, ifeyo ndiye Umuaro. Choncho mvetsera mwatcheru zimene ndikufuna ndikuuze. Umuaro akufuna kukuuza kuti upite n’kukadya zilazi zotsalazo lero, ndipo kenako utiuze tsiku loti tiyambe kukolola. Wamva zimene ndanenazi? Ndanena kuti upite ukadye zilazi zotsalazo lero, osati mawa. Ngati Ulu atanene kuti zachitikazi ndi malaulo, malodza onse akhale pamitu ya anthu khumife osati pa iweyo. Iweyo ukhale pamtendere chifukwa tachita kukutuma. Munthu amene amatuma mwana wake kuti akawole manyi, amayeneranso kumupatsa madzi osamba m’manja. Ifeyo tikupatsa madzi oti usambire m’manja. Umuaro, kodi ndayankhula zoyenera?”

“Wanena zonse zofunikira. Ifeyo ndi amene tita-patsidwe chilango ngati mulungu atakwiya chifukwa cha

zimenezi.”

“Atsogoleri a Umuaro, musaganize kuti ndikupe-putsa mawu anu,” anatero Ezeulu. “Si cholinga changa kuchita zimenezo. Koma inuyo simunganene kuti: ‘Chita zimene sitimachitazi ndipo ifeyo ndi amene titayankhe mlandu.’ Ineyo ndiye wansembe wa Ulu ndipo zimene ndakuuzanizo ndi maganizo a Ulu osati anga. Musaiwale kuti nanenso ndili ndi munda wa zilazi komanso kuti ana anga, achibale komanso anzanga—kuphatikizaponso inuyo—nawonso anadzala zilazi ndipo zidakali m’nthakamu. Sichingakhale cholinga changa kuti anthu onsewa avutike chifukwa cha ine. Ndipo si cholinga changa kuti ngakhale munthu wosanunkha kanthu wa mu Umuaro muno avutike. Zimene zikuchitikazi si zochokera m’mutu mwanga. Nthawi zina milungu imatigwiritsa ntchito ngati chikwapu.”

“Kodi Ulu anakuuza kuti wakwiya ndi chiyani? Kodi pali nsembe yomwe tingapereke kuti mtima wake ukhale panso?”

“Sindikubisirani chichewa abale anga. Ulu wanena kuti ali ndi mkwiyo waukulu chifukwa cha miyezi iwiri yathunthu imene inadutsa popanda munthu womuswera kola, koma Umuaro yense anangokhala duu ngati sizikumu-
mukhudza.”

“Ndiye akufuna kuti ifeyo tichite chiyani?” anafunsa Ofoka, mwaukali.

“Sindikudziwa kuti akufuna kuti muchite chiyani Ofoka. Nnanyelugo anandifunsa funso ndipo ineyo ndamuyankha, zinazo sindikudziwa.”

“Koma ngati Ulu—”

“Tiyeni tisakangane pa nkhani imeneyi Ofoka. Tamufunsa Ezeulu kuti Ulu wakwiya chifukwa chiyani ndipo watiyankha. Nkhani yomwe tikufunika kuganizira ndi

mmene tingakhazikire pansi mtima wake tsopano. Tiyeni timuuze Ezeulu kuti apite kwa mulunguyo n’kukamuuzza kuti tavomereza kulakwa kwathu ndipo tikukonza zoti tipereke nsembe yachipepeso. Kupalamula kulikonse kumakhala ndi nsembe yake. Imayambira pa ndalama zochepa mpaka kufika pa ng’ombe yaikulu, ndipo zikavutitsitsa timatha kupereka nsembe ya munthu. Tiyeni tingodikira yankho.”

“Ngati mukufuna kuti ndipitenso kwa Ulu n’kukamufunsa zimenezi, ndipita. Koma ndikufuna ndikuchenjezeni kuti mulungu akanena kuti mumupatse nsembe ya mwanapiye inu n’kupitanso kukamufunsa ulendo wachiwiri, amatha kukweza nsembeyo kuchoka pa mwanapiye kufika pa mbuzi.”

“Musaganize kuti ndimakonda kufunsa mafunso,” anatero Ofoka. “Koma ndikufuna kudziwa kuti iweyo uli kumbali yandani Ezeulu. Ngati ndikukumbukira bwino unanena kuti mulungu akukugwiritsa ntchito ngati chikwapu chonyapulira Umuaro . . .”

“Ngati ungandimvere Ofoka, chonde tiyeni tisakangane pa nkhani imeneyi,” anatero Ezekwesili. “Tafika kumapeto kwa zimene tinabwerera kuno. Panopa chomwe chatsala ndi kudikira kuchokera kwa Ezeulu kuti atiuze uthenga wochokera kwa Ulu. Zili ngati tabzala zilazi m’munda wa Anaba-nti.”

Ena aja anavomereza ndipo Nnanyelugo mochenjera kwambiri anasintha nkhaniyo n’kuyamba kukamba ina. Iye anapereka zitsanzo za miyambo yomwe inasinthidwa m’zaka zapitazo pamene miyamboyoyinkaoneka kuti si yothandizanso pa moyo wa anthu. Anakambirana za miyamboyoyinkaoneka kwa nthawi yaitali. Ina mwa miyamboyoyinali yoti anakhala akuitsatira kwa zilumika zosawerengeka pomwe ina inali itangoyamba chakumene. Nnanyelugo

ananenanso kuti ngakhale pa nkhani yolandira mipando yaulemu, zinthu zinali zitasintha. Kalekalelo, anthu ochita zakupsa mu Umuaro ankapatsidwanso mpando wachisanu. Mpando umenewu unali wa mfumu. Koma zinthu zomwe zinkafunika kuti munthu alandire mpando waulemu umenewo zinali zovuta kwambiri moti palibe munthu amene anaulandirapo. Chinthu china chimene munthu amene ankafuna kulandira mpando wachifumuwa ankayenera kuchita chinali kulipira ngongole yomwe anthu onse a mu Umuaro anakongola kwa anzawo. Ezeulu sananene chilichonse pamene akuluakuluwa ankakambirana zime-nezi.

Monga mmene analonjezera akuluakulu a Umuaro, m'mawa kutacha Ezeulu anakalowa m'kachisi wa Ulu. Atalowa anayamba wayang'ana uku ndi uku ndipo kenako analowa m'chipinda chamkati. Atangolowa anatsamira chitseko cholowera m'chipindacho. Ngakhale anthu omwe ankamuthandiza sankayerekeza kutsegula chitseko chimenechi. Chitsekocho chinatsekeka ndi nsana wake ndipo kenako analowa mkatikati mwa chipindacho akuyenda chansana. Iye ankapapasa ndi manja ake n'kugwira makoma kuti ayende bwinobwino n'kukafika kumene ankapita. Pamene ankachita zimenezi anali akuyendabe chafutambu-yo. Atafika kumapeto anasuntha mapazi angapo kulowera chapakati ndipo kenako anaima moyang'anizana ndi chulu chomwe chinkaimira Ulu. Chakudenga kwa kachisiyo kumanangiriridwa zibade za mitu ya akulu ansembe omwe anamwalira ndipo zibadezo zinaikidwa mokhala ngati zikuyang'ana chulu chija. Ngakhale dzuwa likamalavula ukali wake, m'kachisimu simunkatentha chifukwa panja

pa kachisiyu panali mitengo yomwe inaweramira padenga ndipo nthunzi wake unkaduliratu dzuwalo kuti lisamawo-mbe pakachisiyo. Chinanso chomwe chinkachititsa kuti muzizizira chinali mtsinje waukulu womwe unadutsa pansi pa chulu chija. Ngakhale munthu akamayandikira kachisiyu ankamva kuzizira kwachilendo. Izi zinkachitika kwa chaka chonse, ndipo nthawi zina ntu-nanya-mili ankagwetsa misozi kuchokera pamwamba pa mitengo yakale kwambiriyi.

Pamene Ezeulu ankaika pansi chingwe chake cha zikamba zankhono, chinganga cha anthu a kutchalitchi kwa Oduche chinayamba kukong'onthedwa. Kwa kanthawi, Ezeulu anasokonezedwa ndi kulira kodandaula kwa chingangacho ndipo anayamba kuona kuti chinkasokosa zedi. Chinkamvekera pafupi kwambiri kuposa mmene chinkamvekera akakhala kunyumba kwake.

Ezeulu analengeza kuti kukumana kwake ndi mulungu sikunaphule kanthu. Iye anawauza kuti midzi isanu ndi iwiriyo iyenera kudikira miyezi iwiri yathunthu kuti iyambe kukolola, ndipo zinkangokhala ngati chaka chapita chawakakamira n'kukhala chachitali kwambiri. Zimenezi zinadabwitsa anthu a mu Umuaro kuposa chilichonse chomwe chinadabwitsapo anthu m'mbuyomo.

Tsopano mvula inali itayamba kuchepa. Panali mvula yankuntho imodzi yokha yomwe inabwera kuti itsuke mwezi watsopano. Mvula imeneyi inachititsa kuti mphepo ya *harmattan* iyambe kuwomba ndipo pamene masiku ankadutsa, mphepoyo inayamba kuumitsa nthaka moti ntchito yokumba zilazi zomwe zinatsekeredwa m'thakayo ikanakhala yakalavulagaya.

Kusagwirizana sinali nkhani yachilendo mu Umuaro. Atsogoleri a Umuaro anakonda kukangana ndipo pakamwa pankawayabwa akangokhala osakokanakokana ndi munthu. Panali mkangano wina pakati pawo pa nkhani yothetsa mwambo wodzilemba ndi choko kumaso ndipo panalinso nkhani zina zazikulu komanso zazing'ono zomwe anakangana nthawi ndi nthawi. Koma palibe nkhani yomwe inatekesa kwambiri dziko n'kukhudza ndi azimayi omwe komanso ana ngati mmene inachitira nkhani yokolola zilaziyi. Ngakhale ana osabadwa anatenga nawo gawo pa mkanganowu.

Mwadzulo lake, Nwafo anamenyana ndi mnzake wina, Obielue. Ndewuyi inayamba pamene onse ankapita kukawonjola mbalame pa ulimbo womwe anatchera munthambi za mitengo iwiri ya *icheku*.

Obielu anakola kambalame kakang'ono kwambiri kotchedwa *nza* pomwe Nwafo anagwira mphepo. Zangati zimenezi zinachitikaponso m'mbuyomo ndipo Obielue anayamba kudzitama kuti iyeyo ndi katswiri pankhani yokola mbalame. Pokwiya ndi zimene mnzakeyo anachita, Nwafo anamugemula mnzakeyo kuti “Namamina” chifukwa nthawi zonse pamphuno pake pankasuzumira mamina owola. Koma Obielu sanasamale za dzina lomwe mnzakeyo ankamutchula chifukwa sikuti Nwafo ankana. Pamphuno pake panafika pokumbikiratu ndi mamina. Pofuna kubwezera, nayenso anangoyamba kumuimba Nwafo kuti “Nachimphuno” chifukwa anali ndi mphuno yaikulu ngati chulu. Koma Obielue anaona kuti zimenezi si zokwanira kumiza chipongwe chimene mnzakeyo ankamulasa nacho moti kenako anayamba kutchula dzina la Ezeulu m'nyimbo ina ya ana, yomwe ankaimba akaona nkhusa yamphongo ya Udo. Nkhosa zimenezi zinkachokera kukachisi wa Udo ndipo zinkangoyendayenda ku-

mene zikufuna. Ana anakonda kunyodola nkhosazi akazona chapatali. Nthawi zonse anawa ankaimba nyimboyi kwinaku akuwomba m'manja. Nyimboyi inkauza nkhosayo kuti isiye kumangodziipitsira. Nyimboyi inali yachipongwe zedi.

Ndiye m'malo motchula *ebunu* m'nyimboyi, Obielu anatchula Ezeulu. Nwafo analephera kuugwira mtima moti anakunga chibakera n'kumubwanyula mnzakeyo kukamwa ndipo magari anayamba kutuluka.

Pa usiku umodzi wokha, mbiri ya Ezeulu inawoleratu m'midzi yonse ndipo banja lake linayamba kukumana ndi mavuto a zosankha zake.

Ana ake ankanyozedwa akamapita kumadzi ndipo akazi ake ankaswayidwa akapita kumsika. Tsiku lina la *Nkwo*, Matefi anapita kogula dengulu lachinangwa chikonzakonza kwa bwenzi lake Ojinika, mkazi wa Ndulue. Iye ankamvana ndi Ojinika moti nthawi zonse ankamugula zinthu ndipo nayenso anamugulitsapo zinthu maulendo osawerengeka. Koma patsikuli Ojinika ankangokhala ngati sanayambe wamuonepo.

"Ndipereka *ego nato*," anatero Matefi.

"Pajatu ndakuuza kale kuti mtengo wake ndi *ego nese*."

"Koma ineyo ndikuona kuti mtengo wachinagwachi ndi *ego nato*, ndi kadengu kakang'onotu aka."

Matefi ananyamula dengulo pofuna kumuonetsa kuti ndi kakang'onodi.

Zitafika pamenepo, Ojinika anangosiya kumusamala n'kuyamba kuyala malonda ake.

"Ndiye ukuti bwanji, sundichotsera?"

"Ngati sukufuna kupereka ndalama imene ndakuuzayo, pita ukagule kwina. Siya pansi dengulu langalo!" Kenako anasintha mawu ake n'kuyamba kumwetulira mwa-

chipongwe. “Kapenatu ukufuna ndikupatse ulele? Iwetu udikira kuti zilazi ziwole munthaka ndipo udzabwera n’kudzagula dengu limeneli modula ndi ndalama za ngwere khumi zisanu ndi zitatu.”

Matefi sanali munthu womutengera kuntoso ngati maliro a njoka. Iye anapereka ndalama za chinangwacho kwa Ojinika ndipo kuwonjezera pamenepo anamuuzanso kuchuluka kwa ndalama zamalowolo zimene mwamuna wake anapereka pamene ankamukwatira. Ndiyeno atafika kwawo, anayamba kuganizira chidani chimene anthu ankasonyeza banja lake. Chinachake chinamuuza kuti chinthu chachikulu chichitika ndipo maganizo amenewa anamuchititsa mantha.

“Tapita ukamuitane Obika,” iye anauza mwana wake wamkazi, Ojiugo. Pa nthawiyi Matefi ankakonza koko kuti ayambe zophikaphika ndipo Obika anatulukira n’kukhala pansi motsamira mtengo woimitsira chitseko womwe unali pakati pa khomo lolowera m’khumbimo. Obika anali atavala chithewera chomwe chinadutsa pakati pa miyendo yake n’kuzungulira m’chiwuno mwake ngati mkuzi. Anakhala pansi mongodziponya ngati chithumba ndipo ankaoneka wotopa kwambiri. Mayi ake aja anapitirizabe kukonza koko uja.

“Ojiugo wandiuza kuti mumandifuna.”

“Inde.” Kenako anapitiriza kuchita zomwe ankachita.

“Mumafuna kuti ndizidzaonerera mukuphika kokoyu? Mumandiitaniranji?”

“Ndikufuna kuti ukayankhule ndi bambo ako.”

“Ndikayankhule nawo za chiyani?”

“Za chiyani? Za zimene achi . . . kodi ndiwe mlendo m’mudzi muno? Kodi sukuona tsoka limene likubwerali?”

“Ndiye inuyo mukufuna kuti achite chiyani? Muku-

funa asamvere Ulu?”

“Ndimadziwa kuti sungamvere zonena zanga.” Mayi akewo anakwanitsa kumanga pamodzi chisoni komanso nkhwawa yomwe anali nayo m’kawu amenewa.

“Kodi ndingakumvereni bwanji mukugwirizana ndi anthu adera n’kumalimbikitsa mwamuna wanu kuti aike mutu wake pamoto?”

“Nthawi zina ndimakhala pachiyeso chovomereza kuti Ezeulu anatengera misala ya mayi ake,” anatero Ogbuefi Ofoka. “Pamene ndinapita kunyumba kwake kukamuona atabwera kuchokera ku Okperi, ankayankhula ngati munthu yemwe mutu wake umakoka. Ndinamukumbutsa za mwambi umene amakonda kunena wakuti munthu amayenera kumavina gule yemwe akuvunidwa pa nthawiyo. Ifeyo tazindikira mochedwa kuti kawu akewo ndi oona. Koma n’zodabwitsa kuti lero sakufuna kusintha maganizo moti wakonzeka kumangoonerera midzi isanu ndi iwiri ikulanguluzika ndi njala m’malo moti angodya zilazi ziwiri zotsalazo.”

“Inenso maganizo amenewo anandibwerera,” anatero Akuebue yemwe ankayendera asewere akewa. “Ineyo ndimamudziwa Ezeulu kuposa anthu ambiri. Iye uja safuna kuuzidwa zochita ngakhale pang’ono. Amaiwala kuti wangokhala mtumiki chabe wa Ulu. Izi zili apo, ndikuganiza kuti sanganene zabodza zokhudza chosankha cha Ulu. Ngati atatero Ulu sangamulekerere, akhoza kumopotokola khosi.”

“Inetu sindinanene kuti Ezeulu akunama. Chimene ife tinamuuza n’choti anyamuke n’kupita kukadya zilazi zotsalazo, ndipo ngati mulunguyo angakwiye nazo, mla-

ndu ukhale pamitu pathu. Koma iye anamenyetsa nkhwa-ngwa pamwala kuti sangachite zimenezo. Chifukwa? Akuti chifukwa choti midzi isanu ndi iwiri inalola kuti mzungu amutenge n’kupita naye kwina. Chimenecho n’chifukwa chimene akumapereka. Iye wakhala akusakasaka mpata woti akhaulitsire Umuaro ndipo wasankha kugwiritsa ntchito danga limeneli. Zangokhala ngati nyumba imene amafuna kuigwetsa yayaka yokha moto.”

“Sindikukayikira kuti wakhala akusunga chakukhosi kwa nthawi yaitali. Koma ineyo sindikuona kuti chakukhosi chimenecho chingamuchititse kuti afike mpaka pamenepa. Musaiwaletu kuti nayenso ali ndi munda wachikhalire wa zalazi womwe sanakolole ngati ena tonsefe . . .”

“Zimenezo ndi zimenenso anatiuza. Koma bwana-we, munthu wodzimva ngati iyeyu akamafuna kubwezera samasamala ngakhale pang’ono. Amalolera kuvutika ngakhaleenso kudulidwa mutu kumene kuti anzake akhaule. Komanso anaiwala kuti uza kuti kaya zilazi zathu ziwolera m’nthaka, aliyense afunikabe kutenga chilazi chimodzi n’kukachipereka ngati nsembe kwa Ulu.”

“Komaditu zikufunika kutero.”

“Ndikuuze chinthu chimodzi Akuebue. Wansembe ngati Ezeulu amachititsa kuti mulungu wake asiye kukondedwa kapenanso awonongedwe kumene. Zangati zimenezi zinachitikaponso m’mbuyomu.”

“Koma zimenezo sizinachitike ndi Ulu. Ngati Ezeulu akuchita zosayenera, mulunguyo akhoza kungopereka chilango kwa wansembe wakeyo.”

Panali munthu m’modzi yekha yemwe ankasangalala pa-

mene mavuto anakulirakulira mu Umuaro ndipo ankaona kuti ndi madalitso ochokera kwa Mulungu. Munthu ameneyu anali John Jaja Goodcountry, yemwe anali mphunzitsi wakatekisimu kutchalitchi chatsopano chija. Kumudzi kwawo kunali m'mbali mwa mtsinje wa Niger komwe azungu anakonda kufikira akamachokera ku Ulaya. Ngakhale anali atangokhala ku Umuaro kwa chaka chimodzi chokha, iye anathandiza kuti zinthu zokhudza mpingo komanso sukulu zipite patsogolo kwambiri zomwe aphunzitsi komanso abusa ena zinawakanika m'mbuyomo. Kalasi yake yophunzitsa katekisimu inakula kuchoka pa anthu khumi ndi anayi kufika pa khumi asanu ndi anayi. Ambiri mwa anthu amenewa anali anyamata amene ankapitanso kusukulu yophunzitsa kulemba ndi kuwerenga yomwe inatsegulidwa ndi tchalitchi. Pofika pa nthawi, munthu m'modzi anali atabatizidwa patchalitchichi ndipo ena atatu ankayembekezera kukabatizidwa kupalishi ya ku Okperi. Tikaphatikiza onse, tchalitchi chaching'ono cha Goodcountry chinkatumiza anthu asanu ndi anayi ku Okperi pa zochitika zapadera ngati zimenezi. Iye anali asanatembenuzepo munthu ngakhale m'modzi ndipo izi size-nali zodabwitsa chifukwa anthu a mtundu wa chiIbo anali ovuta kuwasintha kuti akhale Akhristu.

Koma mavuto omwe ankachitika mu Umuarowa anachititsa kuti tchalitchichi chidye kuwo. Kukula kwa mavutowo kunkangokhala ngati kukupopa tchalitchichi kuti chikule. Goodcountry ankadziwa bwino mbiri yachikhristu ya ku Niger, komwe ankalimbikitsa anthu odzipereka m'tchalitchi, ngati Joshua Hart, kuti azifika mpaka pololera kufa chifukwa cha chikhulupiriro chawo. Iwo ankachita dala zinthu zosiyana ndi chikhalidwe chawo pofuna kusonyeza kuti iwowo ndi okhwima mwauzimu komanso kuti ndi Akhristu enieni. Anthuwa ankachita

zimenezi mwapayererepayere fisi anadya mkazi wake. Choncho pokhala munthu wochokera kudera la anthu achikhulupiriro, Goodcountry sakanalola kusokonezedwa ndi munthu wopanda chikhulupiriro yemwe ankaonabe kuti nsato ndi njoka yopatulika. Patangodutsa masabata angapo atafika ku Umuaro, Goodcountry anayamba ku-menya nkhondo yolimbana ndi nsato yopatulika mofanana ndi mmene anthu a kumudzi kwawo anachitira ndi gulo wopatulika. Koma mwatsoka anakumana ndi wotsutsa m'modzi, Moses Unachukwu, yemwe anali Mkhristu wo-yambirira ku Umuaro.

Atangofika mumpingowu, Goodcountry ankamusi-yyira Unachukwu akamachita zinthu zosonyeza ngati amadziwa zonse. A Molokwu, omwe anasinthana ndi Goodcountry, ankangomuyang'ana Unachukwu akamachita zimenezi. Koma Goodcountry anaona ndi maso awo mme-ne kulekerera munthu wosaphunzira yemwe wangoyam-bapo kutembenukira kuchikhristu kungasokonezere mpingo wonse ngati m'busa kapena mphunzitsi wakateki-simu atakhala wopanda mphamvu. Choncho iye sanamun-yengerere kungochokera pachiyambi. Cholinga chake sichinali kumupala mamba Unachukwu chifukwa ankadziwa kuti ngati atakhumudwa ndiye kuti akhoza kutaya mzati wa mpingo watsopanowo. Iye ankadziwa kuti kupe-zanso munthu wina wangati iyeyo singakhale nkhani yophweka. Choncho, cholinga chake chinali kungomutha-ndiza kuti awongole zina ndi zina n'kuyamba kukhala moyo wogwirizana ndi Malemba.

Koma nayenso Unachukwu sanapereke mpata kwa Goodcountry. Iye ankatsutsa poyera n'kufika polumbira kuti munthu amene angasewere ndi nsato akhoza kuona zakuda.

Unachukwu atamaliza kuyankhula, Goodcountry

anangoganiza zoponyera nkhaniyi kunkhongo n'kuisiya. Koma zikuoneka kuti sankadziwa kuti akulimbana ndi munthu wotani. Unehuku sanali munthu woti ukayambana naye n'kukusiya. Iye ananyamuka n'kukakumana ndi kalaliki wa ku Okperi n'kukamupempha kuti amulembere chikalata m'malo mwa wansembe wa Idemili. Kalatayo inali yoti ipite kwa bishop wa ku Niger. Ngakhale tinganene kuti inali kalata, mawu ake anali oopseza okhaokha. Inkachenjeza bishopuyo kuti ngati otsatira awo, omwe ali ku Umuaro atapanda kusiya kulimbana ndi nsato yopatulika aonetsedwa mbwadza. Popeza kalatayo inalembedwa ndi kalaliki wodziwa ntchito yake kunyumba zaboma, inali ndi mawu ena ndi ena okhudza zamalamulo, dongsolo loyendetsera zinthu komanso mawu ena ngati kusa-sokoneza mtendere.

Bishopuyo anali atangokumananso ndi vuto langati lomweli m'chigawo chomwe ankayang'anira. Munthu wina wachinyamata yemwe anangotembenukira ku Chikhristu anatsogolera anzake powotcha kachisi komanso kupha nsato yopatulika. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti anthu a m'mudzi apirikitse Akhristu onse m'mudzimo n'kuwotcha nyumba zawo. Vuto limeneli likanafika poipa kwammbiri zikanakhala kuti a boma sanalowererepo n'kubwera ndi asilikali awo. Zimenezi zitangochitika, Lieutenant Governor analemba kalata yamphamvu yochenjeza bishopuyo kuti aziletsa nkhoa zake kuti zisamachite zinthu mogulukira.

Pachifukwa chimenechi, komanso chifukwa choti nayenso sankagwirizana ndi kusonyeza chikhulupiriro monyanyira chonchi, bishopuyo analemba kalata yamphamvu kwa Goodcountry. Iye analembanso kalata ina yopita kwa Izidemili yomutsimikizira kuti nkhoa ya tchalitchi chake sidzachitanso zinthu zosokoneza mtendere kapena

kulimbana ndi nsato. Bishopuyo anapezeraponso mpata wolalikira moti m'kalatayo ananena kuti azimupemphe-rera wansembe wa Idemiliyo ndiponso anthu ake kuti tsiku lina adzatembenuke mtima n'kusiya kulambira nsato komanso mafano opanda moyo.

Kalata yochokera kwa wansembe wachizunguyi inathandiza ambiri kuzindikira kuti ndi bwino kukhala ndi anthu angapo okhala ngati Moses Unachukwu omwe ankadziwa bwino njira komanso maganizo a mzungu ndiponso mmene angachitire naye zinthu. Kulolera kwa bishopu uja kunali ndi zotsatira zabwino kwambiri. Posa-khalitsa anthu ena omwe anali ofunika kwambiri m'fuko lawo, anayamba kutumiza ana awo kusukulu. Ngakhale-nso Nwaka anatumiza mwana wake wina, yemwe anka-oneka kuti ndi waulensi pa nkhani zaulimi.

Popeza Goodcountry sankadziwa nkhani yonse yomwe inachititsa kuti ana ambiri azibwera kusukulu kwake komanso kutchalitchi, anayamba kunena kuti anthuwo akubwera chifukwa cha ntchito yake yotamandika, yomwe n'kutheka kuti inathandizadi.

Kenako analemba lipoti lokhudza kuyenda bwino kwa ntchito yake yofalitsa uthenga wabwino ku Umuaro. Lipotili linatuluka m'magazini yatchalitchi m'chigawo-cho. Monga mwa mwambo wake, atamaliza kudzitama-ndira, Goodcountry anatseka lipotilo ndi mawu akuti ntchito yoyenda bwino chifukwa cha thandizo la mzi-mu woyera.

Ndiye tsopano Goodcountry anaona kuti mavuto omwe ankachitika mu Umuaro okhudza Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano ndi mwayi woti mpingo wake ubale zipatso zochuluka. Iye anakonza mwambo watchalitchi chake wotsegulira ntchito yokolola. Mwambowu unachitika Lamlungu lachiwiri m'mwezi wa November. Zinthu

zimene akanapeza pamwambowu zinali zoti azigwiritse ntchito pomanga malo atsopano olambirira, omwe akana-khala opereka ulemu kwa Mulungu komanso abwino kwam-biri mu Umuaro monse.

Pulani yake inali yosavuta. Chikondwerero cha Zi-lazi Zatsopano inali njira yachikunja yoyamikira mulungu, yemwe amapereka mphatso zonse zabwino. Ndipo anka-muyamikira mulunguyo chifukwa choti wawadalitsa ndi zokolola. Choncho Goodcountry ankaona kuti anthuwo akhamukira kwa iye akamva zoti pali njira ina yomwe ingathandize kuti zokolola zawo zisawolere m'nthaka. Iye anaona kuti aziwauza kuti munthu amene angapereke mphatso zake kwa Mulungu wakumwamba akhoza kuko-lola mbewu zake popanda kuopa Ulu.

“Ndiye mukutanthauza kuti tikhoza kumakauza abale athu achikunja kuti akhoza kubwera ndi chilazi chi-modzi kutchalitchi kuno m'malo mopita nacho kwa Ulu?” anafunsa munthu wina yemwe anali watsopano m'komiti ya tchalitchi cha Goodcountry.

“Inde mukhoza kumakawauza. Koma osati chilazi chimodzi chokha. Muziwauza kuti akhoza kubweretsa zi-lazi zochuluka mogwirizana ndi zokolola zimene Mulu-ngu wawapatsa chaka chino. Komanso sikuti azingobwe-reta zilazi zokha, akhozanso kumabweretsa zokolola zam-tundu uliwonse, ngakhalenso zifuyo kapena ndalama.”

Munthu amene anafunsa funso lija ankaoneka kuti sanakhutire ndi yankho anapatsidwalo moti anangoyamba kukanda mutu wake.

“Mwamvetsa koma?”

“Tamva zimene mwanena. Komabe ndikuganiza kuti zingakhale zovuta kuti tizikawauza kuti abweretse zilazi zambiri m'malo mobweretsa chimodzi. Mukudziwa mmene chikhalidwe chathu, kapena ndinene kuti chikha-

lidwe chawo, chimayendera. Iwo anazolowera kupititsa chilazi chimodzi chokha kwa Ulu moti zingakhale zovuta kwambiri kuti achite zosiyana ndi zimenezo.”

Moses Unachukwu yemwe ankaoneka kuti akugwirizana kotheratu ndi Goodcountry pa nkhaniyi, anathandiza kwambiri. “Ngati Ulu yemwe ndi mulungu wonyenga amadya chilazi chimodzi, ndiye kuli bwanji mulungu wamoyo yemwe amayang’anira dziko lonse? Akufunikatu zilazi zowonjereka.”

Choncho nkhani yakuti aliyense amene akufuna kuti mbewu zake zisawolere munthaka apite kukapereka nseme kwa mulungu wa Akhristu, yemwe ankanena kuti ali ndi mphamvu zoteteza anthu ku nkwiyo wa Ulu, inafala ponseponse. Mukanakhala m’mbuyomo, anthu akang’ambika kukamwa chifukwa choseka nkhaniyi. Koma ule-ndo uno palibe anaseka chifukwa chinthu chimene chinkachititsa kuti munthu aseke chinali chitagwera mkati chifukwa cha nkhawa.

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Anthu oyambirira kuona ululu wa kuchedwa kukolola anali a m’banja la Ogbuefi Amalu, yemwe anamwalira m’nyengo yadzinja chifukwa cha *arummo*. Amalu anali munthu wochita zinthu zakupsa, ndipo zikanakhala kuti zinthu zinali bwino, mwambo wachiwiri wolira maliro ake komanso phwando la sadaka likanachitika patangotha masiku awiri kapena atatu chimwalirireni. Koma imfa yake inali yoipa kwambiri, yomwe inampha munthu m’nthawi ya njala. Amalu nayenso ankadziwa zimenezi ndipo anakonzeratu zoyenera kuchita. Asanamwalire, anaitana mwana wake woyamba, Aneto, ndipo anamuza mmene dongosolo la maliro ake lidzakhalire.

“Ndikanakuza kuti pakangotha tsiku limodzi kape-na awiri nditaikidwa m’manda mudzachite sadaka. Koma kuchita zimenezi ndi *ugani*. Sindingakuuzeni kuti mukonze phwando lolira maliro anga mulibe chilichonse. Nanga anthuwo mudzawapatsa chiyani? Kapenatu mudzawadyetsa malovu anuwo? Ndikhala ndikuyembekezera mpaka pamene mudzakolole zilazi kuti mudzandichitire phwandolo.” Iye ankayankhula movutikira kwambiri, moti ankafunika mphamvu zambiri kuti apume. Aneto anali atagwada pambali pa kama wansungwi yemwe bambo akewo anagona ndipo ankamvetsera mwatcheru kuti atole chilichonse chimene bambo akewo ankanong’ona chapansipasi pakati pa phokoso la kupuma kwawo komwe

kunkamveka ngati kung'ambika kwa chipika. Mankhwala omwe anapaka pachifuwa pawo anali atauma ndipo anang'aluka ngati dothi lakatondo m'thawi ya ng'amba. "Koma musadzayerekeze kuchedwa kuchita chikondwerero-chi chifukwa mungadzandikwiyitse koopsa. Sindikufuna kuti idzadutse miyezi inayi kuchokera pamene ndamwalira. Komanso musaiwale, ndikufuna kuti mudzandiphere ng'ombe yamphongo."

Panali nkhanu ya mnyamata wa fuko lina yemwe anapita kukawombeza ula. Iye anapita kumeneko chifuwa anamva zoti bambo ake, omwe anamwalira m'mbuyomo, ankafuna kuti awaphere mbuzi. Mnyamatayo anauza wa ulayo kuti: "Mukandifunsireko kwa bambowo ngati pa moyo wawo anayamba akhalapo ndi nkuku." Koma Ogbuefi Amalu sanali bambo ngati ameneyu. Aliyense ankadziwa kuti pamene ankamwalira anasiya ng'ombe mazana anayi ndipo sanapemphe mwana wake kuti aphe ng'ombe zambiri, koma imodzi basi.

Pamene ankadikirira Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano, Aneto, ang'ono ake komanso achibale awo anasankha tsiku loti adzachite sadaka ya Amalu ndipo analengeza mu Umuaro monse komanso kwa achibale awo ndi azilamu awo omwe anali m'mafuko ena a midzi yapafupi.

Ndi kuchedwa kwa kukololaku, mitu yawo inaima. Kodi akanapitirizabe kusuntha masiku omwe anakonza kuti achite sadakayo kapena akanangokonzera Amalu kamphwando kosalongosoka? Ankaona kuti akachita zimezezi mzimu wa Amalu uwakwiyira koopsa. Akayerekezera njira ziwirizi, iwo anaona kuti bolako asunthire patsogolo, kusiyana ndi kuti akonze phwando lopanda zilazi. Koma kuti atsimikizire zimenezi, Aneto anapita kwa *afa* kuti akafunse bambo akewo zimene angakonde.

Aneto sanayerekeze kufunsa bambo akewo ngati

angakonde kupangiridwa phwando lonyentchera ngati la kampopangolo. M'malo mwake anafunsa ngati n'zotheka kusunthira tsiku la phwandolo kutsogolo pang'ono kufikirira pamene adzakolole zilazi zawo. Koma Amalu anakana kwam'tuwagalu. Iye anali ataima kwa nthawi yaitali mumvula komanso padzuwa, kudikirira phwandolo, ndipo sakanakwanitsanso kupirira kuposa pamenepa. Munthu wosauka akhoza kudikirira kwa nthawi yaitali mpaka pamene abale ake adzapeze tidzakudya toti amuphikire. Chimenecho ndiye chinali chilango cha osauka omwe analephera kuchita zakupsa m'moyo. Koma kwa munthu wochita bwino ngati Amalu, yemwe anavutika kuchita zaphindu mpaka kulandira mipando iwiri yaulemu, ankayenera kuphikiridwa sadaka yapamwamba ndi anthu omwe anawasiyira chuma chomwe anakhetsera thukuta.

Aneto anaitanitsa msonkhano wapachibale ndipo anawafotokozera zimene bambo ake ananena. Palibe amene anadabwa ndi zimenezi. "Kodi ndi ndani amene angaimbe mlandu Amalu?" iwo anafunsa. "Kodi iye sanadikire kwa nthawi yaitali pofika pano? Vuto ndi la Ezeulu. Iye akufuna kuti achibale a Amalu apuse n'kufika pomakabwereka zilazi m'midzi ina pomwe zilazi zawo zangotsekeredwa munthaka." Anthu a m'midzi yambiri anali akunenepa komanso kulemera chifukwa cha mapindu amene ankawapeza pogulitsa modula zilazi zawo kwa anthu a ku Umuaro. Iwo anangopezerapo mwayi pa mavuto a anzawo. Pa tsiku lililonse la *Nkwo*, anthuwo ankabwera ndi zilazi kumsika wa ku Umuaro ndipo ankazigulitsa modula kwambiri ngati golide. Poyamba ndi anthu okhawo opanda mipando yaulemu, azimayi komanso ana omwe ankadya zilazi zochokera kwinazi. Koma njala itafika pampondachimera n'kuwayamba kuwanyenya matumbo, ena anayamba kunena kuti palibe mwambo womwe uma-

letsa anthu a mu Umuaro kudya zilazi zochokera m'minda yapakhomo. Komanso kodi kumene amakumbako ndi ndani amene analipo, yemwe akanalumbira n'kunena kuti ndi zilazidi zatsopano? Zimenezi zinachititsa anthu kuyamba kuseka ndi mbali imodzi yokha ya nkhope zawo. Koma anthu omwe analandira mpando waulemu ankaonetsetsa kuti sakudya zilazi zimenezi anthu ena akuwaona. Ambiri ankangokumba zilazi zimene anabzala pakhomo pawo kuti akazi ndi ana awo asachite kutsala mafupa okhaokha. Kuchokera kale kwambiri, zinali zololeka kukumba pang'ono zilazi zomwe unadzala pakhomo kuti udyetse banja lako zikakhala kuti njala yafika pofiiritsa maso. Koma tsopano sinalinso nkhani yongokumba zilazi zingapo, anthu ankangokumbabe mpaka munda wonse wapakhomo kutheratu.

Khomo la Ezeulu ndi limene linakumana ndi vuto lalikulu kwambiri kuposa makomo onse a mu Umuaro. Pofuna kupereka chitsanzo chabwino kwa ena onse, pakhomo pa Mkulu Wansembe sipankayenera kukumbidwa zilazi zatsopano nyengo yake isanafike, kapena kukagula zilazi kumsika n'kumadya. Choncho Ezeulu ndi banja lake anapirira movutikira mpaka pamapeto. Popeza banja lawo linali lochita bwino kusiyana ndi mabanja ena, iwo anali ndi zilazi zambiri zomwe anakolola chaka chapita. Koma pofika nthawi, zilazizo zinali zitanyala moti sizinkakoma. Asanaziphike ankafunika kuzisinja kaye kuti achotse mitsitsi. Koma posakhalitsa nazonso zilazi zimenezi zinatha.

Koma vuto lolemera kwambiri linali m'mutu mwa Ezeulu. Iye anali atazolowera kukhala yekhayekha. Monga Mkulu Wansembe, Ezeulu anakonda kutsogolera anthu a mu Umuaro pa zochitika zosiyanasiyana. Popanda kucheukira kumbuyo, iye ankamva anthuwo akuliza zito-

liro komanso akuimba nyimbo zomwe zinkagwedeza nthaka chifukwa cha kuchuluka kwa anthu omwe ankaimba kumbuyo kwake. Koma nthawi zina phokoso loi mbalo linkagawikana pakakhala kusagwirizana ngati mmene zinakhalira pa nkhani ya malo olima omwe ankalingbirana ndi anthu a ku Okperi.

Koma pofika pano, Ezeulu anali asanaonepo anthu omwe ankamutsatirawo atasiyiratu kuimba. Anthu owere ngeka okha ndi omwe ankabwerabe kunyumba kwake ndipo akabwera sankanena chilichonse. Ezeulu ankafuna kudziwa zomwe anthu a mu Umuaro ankanena, koma palibe amene anayerekeza kumuuzza kanthu. Nayenso sankafuna kuti anthu adziwe kuti akufuna atadziwa zimenezi. Choncho pamene masiku ankadutsa, anthu anatsekeratu pakamwa pawo ndi zomatira n’kufika poti munthu akana tha kubooka nazo m’mimba. Ezeulu anayamba kumva ululu mkati mwake ndipo nthawi zina ankalakalaka atatuluka m’khumbi mwake kapenanso kupita ku *Nkwo* n’kukayamba kulalatira anthu a mu Umuaro.

Popeza palibe amene ankabwera pafupi ndi Ezeulu kuti aone kukhumudwa kwake, aliyense ankaganiza kuti Ezeulu wakhala m’khumbi mwake ndipo akungomwetulira akamaona mavuto omwe ali mu Umuaro. Anthuwa sakanamvetsa ngakhale akanaona kuti wakhumudwa. Komabe ngakhale pa nthawiyi Ezeulu sankana kuti mavutowa atembenukira iyeyo. Zinkangokhala ngati sakuona kuti mavuto ankachitikawo ankamukhailitsa komanso kumuzunza kwambiri kuposa anthu ena onse. Chomwe chinkamuwawa kwambiri, chinthu chimenechi chokha n’chimene ankachivomereza, ndi choti chilangochi sichinali cha nthawi imeneyi yokha koma mpaka kalekale. Chilangochi chikanazunza Umuaro ngati matenga a *ogulu-aro* omwe amati akasiya munthu kwa chaka, amabwereranso

n’kudzamukwatira. Pamene mkwiyo unkayakirayakira muntima mwake, iye anayamba kumvera chisoni Umua-ro, mtundu womwe kalekalelo abuluzi asanamere michira, unasankha agogo ake kuti anyamule mulungu n’kumaye-nda patsogolo akulimbana ndi mavuto komanso zoopsa zosiyanasiyana zomwe zinali kutsogolo. Agogo akewo ankafunika kulimbana ndi mavutowo m’ malo mwa anthu-wo.

N’kutheka kuti Ezeulu akanakhala kuti sakumva chilichonse chochokera kunja akanatha kukhala bwino-bwino. Koma panali mawuna ena omwe zidutswa za nkhani zinkalowera. Zimenezi zinkachititsa kuti avutike kwambiri chifukwa zinkangokhala ngati munthu waludzu wangopatsidwa kadondo ka madzi palirime lake.

Patsikuli Akuebue ndi amene anamupatsa kadontho kangati kameneka. Iye anali munthu yekhayo pakati pa anzake komanso achibale ake omwe ankapitabe kunyumba kwake kukamuona. Koma akabwera ankangokhala duu ndipo akati atsegule pakamwa ankangoyankhula nkhani zosafunika.

Koma patsikuli, iye analephera kudzigwira moti anatchula nkhani ina yatsopano yomwe inkamusowetsa mtendere. N’kutheka kuti Akuebue ndi munthu yekhayo mu Umuaro monse yemwe ankadziwa kuti Ezeulu saku-chita zimenezo kuti angokhaulitsa midzi isanu ndi umodziyo, ngati mmene ambiri ankaganizira. Iye ankadziwa kuti nayenso analibe mphamvu zilizonse zosintha zomwe zinkachitikazo. Zinali ngati mmene ena amanenera kuti mutu ukakula sulewa nkhonya. Choncho nthawi iliyonse yomwe ankapita kukaona Ezeulu, iye sankatokosako ngakhale pang’ono nkhani zina zomwe zinkadetsa anthu nkhaba. Koma patsikuli analephera kugwira pakamwa pake pa nkhani ya zimene Akhristu ankafuna kuchita kuti

apange chikondwerero chokolola mbewu za mu Umuaro.

“Nkhani imeneyi ikundisowetsa mtendere,” iye anatero, “chifukwa zikungokhala ngati zimene makolo athu akale ankanena kuti anthu apachibale akamamenyana, mlendo ndi amene amatenga chuma chawo.”

“Ndiye ukuyembekezera kuti ineyo nditani?” Ezeulu anatambasura manja ake kwa mnzakeyo. “Ngati munthu wina mu Umuaro angaiwale chikhalidwe chake n’kupita kutchalitchi chatsopanochi, zake zimenezo! Akazi onera yekha komweko.”

Akuebue anapukusa mutu wake posowa chonena.

Akuebue atangochoka, Ezeulu anaitana Oduche n’kumufunsa ngati zinali zoonza kuti anthu a tchalitchi chake akufuna kuchita chikondwerero chotsegulira kukolola komanso kuti anthu amene atathawire kwa mulungu watchalitchi chatsopanochi adzatetezedwa kumkwiyo wa Ulu. Koma Oduche anauza bambo akewo kuti sanamvetse funsolo.

“N’chiyani chimene sunamvetse? Kodi anthu a tchalitchi chako akunena kuti munthu aliyense wa mu Umuaro, yemwe akapereke nsembe kukachisi wanu akhala wotetezeka pokolola zilazi zake? Mapirikaniro onsewo ukulephera kumva?”

“Aphunzitsi athu anenadi choncho.”

“Aphunzitsi anu anenadi choncho? Ndiye n’chifukwa chiyani sunandiuze? Unandiuza kapena?”

“Ayi.”

“Chifukwa?” Oduche sanayankhe funsoli. “Ndakufunsa kuti n’chifukwa chiyani sunandiuze?”

Kwa nthawi yaitali, mwana ndi bambo akewa ankangoyang’anizana osanena chilichonse. Pamene Ezeulu ankayankhulanso mawu ake ankamveka chapansipansi komanso achisoni kwambiri.

“Ukukumbukira zimene ndinakuuza pamene ndinkakutumiza kwa anthu amenewa?”

Oduche ankayang’ana chala chake chamwendo wakumanja n’kuchisunthira patsogolo pang’ono.

“Ndiye popeza wasanduka bububu, ndikufuna ndikukumbutse. Ndinakuitana monga mmene bambo amaitanira mwana wake ndipo ndinakuuza kuti upite ukakhale maso komanso makutu anga kwa anthu amenewa. Ine sindinatumize Obika kapena Edogo. Komanso sindinatumize Nwafo, mwana wa mayi ako. Ine ndinakuitana iweyo ndipo iwe unabwera muno n’kukuchonderera kuti upite kuchipembedzo chimenechi. Sindinkadziwa kuti ndinkatumiza chilengwalengwa. Basi, ndichokere muno, pita kukhumbi la mayi ako. Panopa sindikufunanso kuyankhula ndi munthu. Ndikakufunanso ndikuitana kuti ndikuuze maganizo anga onse. Dziwa kuti bambo ako sadzakudaliranso. Ndanena kuti ndichokere muno, iwe buluzi wosokoneza maliro a mayi ake.”

Oduche anatuluka misozi ili payipayi. Zimenezi zinaamukhudza Ezeulu moti anamumvera chisoni mwana wakeyo.

Patapita nthawi, mwezi watsopano unaonekera ndipo Ezeulu anadya chilazi chomaliza. M’mawa wa tsiku lotsatira iye anaitanitsa omuthandizira aja n’kuwauza kuti Chikondwerero cha Zilazi Zatsopano chichitika pakatha masiku makumi awiri mphambu zisanu ndi zitatu.

Patsiku limenelo, ng’oma zinalikitika pakhomo pa Amalu chifukwa cha sadaka yomwe inkayenera kuchitika tsiku lotsatira. Kulira kwa ng’omako kunamveka m’midzi yonse ya Umuaro powakumbutsa za mwambowo. Ndipo

sikuti anthuwo ankachita kufunika kuwakumbutsa chifu-kwa anali atalanguluzika ndi njala moti ankadya chilihonse chodibwa ngati dzombe.

Usiku wa tsikuli Ezeulu analota maloto achilendo kwambiri. Pamene ankadzidzimuka, ankatha kukumbukira malotowo bwinobwino mofanana ndi maloto a ku Okperi aja.

M'malotowo Ezeulu anali atakhala mu *obi* wake. Malinga ndi phokoso lomwe ankamva, zinkaoneka kuti anthuwo akukuwa kuchokera kuseri kwa nyumba yake, kuseri kwa chipupa chachitali choziridwa ndi dothi lakatondo. Zimenezi zinachititsa kuti ayambe kuda nkhawa kwambiri chifukwa kumeneko kunalibe njira. Ndiye ndi ndani wopanda manthayo yemwe anapanga njira kuseri kwa nyumba yake? Iye anadziuza kuti apite kukaona komanso kuti akawatsire mphepo anthuwo mofanana ndi mwambi womwe umati munthu amene amalekerera anthu kumadutsa pakhomu pake, amamuzolowera n'kusandutsapo njira. Koma iye anakayikakayika moti anangoima chilili m'khumbi mwakemo. Koma posakhalitsa kuimba kuja komanso ng'oma zinayamba kumveka kwambiri. Anthuwo ankaimba nyimbo yamaliro yomwe anthu ankaimba akamapita kukakwirira mtembo kumalikukutu.

“Taonani nsato!

Taonani nsato!

Nsato yagona pansewu.”

Monga mwa nthawi zonse, nyimboyo inkamwazidwa mbali zosiyanasiyana ndi mphepo ndipo mawu ake ankatsatanatsatana ngati mafunde. Mawu a anthu omwe anali kutsogolo ankamveka mofulumira kusiyana ndi amene anali kumbuyo kwawo pafupi ndi mtembo wa

womwalirayo, ndipo mawu a amenewanso ankamveka mofulumirako kusi yana ndi a anthu ena amene anali kumbuyo kwawo. Ng’omazo zinkamveka limodzi ndi mawu a gulu lomalizali.

Ezeulu anaitana banja lake kuti lizamuthandize kulimbana ndi anthu omwe ankadutsa kuseri kwa nyumba yakeko. Kukaikira kwakeku kunachititsa kuti angoganiza zotuluka. Iye anathamangira kukhumbi la Matefi, koma anakangopeza phulusa la moto wakalekale. Anatuluka m’menemo n’kupita kukhumbi la Ugoye akuitana mkazi wakeyo ndi ana ake, koma anakapeza khumbilo litayamba kuloshoka moti udzu unali utayamba kumera padenga lake. Kenako anathamangira kunyumba kwa Obika ndipo mawu omwe anachokera kukhumbilo anachititsa kuti thupi lake liumiretu. Phokoso la anthu ankapita kokaika maliro aja linali litazimiririka. Komabe mawu a munthu m’modzi ankamvekabe ndipo ankamveka ngati akubwera limodzi ndi mkazi wa womwalirayo. Mawu amenewa sanasiye kumveka m’mutu mwa Ezeulu.

*“Ndinabadwa abuluzi alipo owerengeka chabe
Mwana wa Idemili. Misozi yogwa kuchokera kumwamba,
ndi imene inandilemba mangawa. Popeza
ndinabadwira kumwamba ndinkayenda mwawulemerero
Ndipo olira anandiona nditadzipindapinda pansewu
Koma tsopano, kulira kodabwitsa kwa chinganga
kwakhala kukuimba nyimbo yachiwonongeko:
Siyani zilazi komanso koko wanu
Ndipo bwerani kutchalitchi.
Motero ndiyenera kuthawa mofulumira
Ana akayamba kusewera kwinaku akukuwa:
Taonani Mkristu wagona pansewu.
Ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha ha . . .”*

Woimbayo anayamba kuseka limodzi ndi anzake ndipo pakhomu ponse pa Ezeulu pankangomveka phokoso la kuseka kokhakokha. Pamenepa m'pamene Ezeulu anadzidzimuka kutulo take. Ngakhale kuti kunja kunkazizira chifukwa cha mphepo ya *harmattan*, iye anali atachita chitungu. Koma anamvako bwino kuti wadzidzimuka ku maloto oopsowo ndipo anayamikira kuti si zenizeni. Ngakhale kuti maloto okhudza za maliro aja anaduka atangodzidzimuka, Ezeulu ankachitabe mantha. Nyimbo yonena za nsato inali itasiya kalekale kumveka. Nyimboyi inkaimbidwa ndi mayi a Ezeulu pa nthawi imene anagwidwa ndi misala. Nwanyi Okperi, monga mmene anthu a ku Umuaro ankawatchulira, anali wodziwa kuimba ali mtsikana, ndipo ankaimba nyimbo za kumudzi kwawo mosavutikira ngati mmene amachitira anthu poyankhula. Pamene ankakalamba, misala ija n'kumakulirakulira, nyimbo zomwe anaphunzira ali ku ubwanazi zinkatuluka nthawi zina kudzera m'mipata ya m'mutu mwawo, yomwe inabooledwa ndi misalayo. Ezeulu ali mwana ankakhala mwamantha kwambiri pa nthawi ngati imeneyi, pamene anthu ankawamangirira mayi akewo ndi tcheni mwezi watsopano ukamaonekera.

Kudutsa kwa Ogbazulobodo kunathandiza kuti Ezeulu abwereremo. N'kutheka kuti inali mphamvu ya maloto aja yomwe inamufowola, koma kwa moyo wake wonse, anali asanamvepo mzimu ukudutsa utakwiya choncho. Kumveka kwake kunkangokhala ngati kwa gulu la asilikali omwe aphimbidwa kuchokera m'khosi mpaka muakakolo zibangiri za *ekpili* zikungindimuka mwaphokoso kwambiri. Chilombocho chinkachokera ku *ilo* ndipo chinkayenda

molowera ku *Nkwo*. N’kutheka chinaona kuwala panyumba ya munthu wina chifukwa chinkaoneka kuti chaima chikukuwa kuti: *Ewo okuo! Ewo okuo!* Munthu amene anasiya nyali yake ikuwalayo ankazindikira kuti wapalamula ndipo nthawi yomweyo anaizimitsa. Kenako mzi-muwo unapitirizabe kuthamanga moti posakhalitsa chinazimiririka.

Ezeulu anadabwa kwambiri kuti n’chifukwa chiya-ni chilombocho sichinatchule dzina lake pamene chinkadutsa pakhomo pake. Iye anayamba kuganiza kuti mwina chinatchula dzinalo asanadzidzimuke kutulo take tija.

Pambuyo pa maloto aja komanso kudutsa kwa Ogbazulobodo, tulo take tinabalalika moti anavutika kuti agonenso. Kenako anayamba kumva kuwomba kwa mfuti kunyumba kwa Amalu. Ankamvanso anthu akuthethetsa m’manja ndipo zimenezi zinatsatana ndi kuimbidwa kwa *ekwe*. Pa nthawi imeneyi m’maso mwake munali mutayereratu. Iye anadzuka n’kuyamba kupapasapapasa kuti atenge chikwanje chake komanso botolo la fodya wofwenkha lomwe linali kumutu kwa kama wake. Kenako anatuluka kuchipinda chogona. Atangofika pamalo ochezera anamva kuluma kwa mphepo ya *harmattan*. Koma mwayi zipika ziwiri za mtengo wa *ukwa* zinali zikadayakabe. Kenako anayamba kupemerera motowo ndipo posakhalitsa unayaka.

M’mudzi wonse, palibenso munthu wina yemwe akanatha kuvala chinyawu cha Ogbazulobodo mofanana ndi mmene Obika ankachitira. Munthu wina akayesa kuchita zimenezi pankaoneka kusintha kwakukulu. Nthawi zambiri ankalephera kuthamanga nacho kapena mawu ake sankatuluka

pakhosi. Mphamvu za *ike-agwu-ani*, ngakhale zinali zochuluka kwambiri, sizikanachititsa kuti nankalizi asanduke gwape kapena munthu wosayankhula kuti asanduke katswiri wodziwa kupota mawu. Chimenechi n'chifukwa chake ngakhale kuti banja la Amalu linali ndi mkwiyo wakulu ndi Ezeulu, Aneto anapitabe kwa Obika n'kukamupempha kuti avale chinyawu cha Ogbazulobodo usiku woti mawa laka apanga sadaka ya bambo ake.

“Sindikufuna kukukanirani ntchitoyi,” anatero Obika pambuyo poti Aneto wamaliza kuyankhula, “koma kuvala chinyawu chimenechi si ntchito yoti munthu angachite thupi lake likumuwawa. Kungochokera dzulo thupili likungokhala ngati si langa.”

“Sindikudziwa kuti vuto ndi chiyani koma aliyense m'mudzi muno akungokhala ngati mphika wosweka,” anatero Aneto.

“Bwanji mumukapemphe Nweke Ukpaka?”

“Ndimadziwa za Nweke Ukpaka pamene ndimabwera kwa iweyo. Ndipo ndadutsa pakhomu pake.”

Obika anaganizira nkhaniyo kwa kanthawi.

“Pali anthu ambiri amene angavale chinyawu,” anatero Aneto. “Koma munthu amene anthu amakonda kumutchulatchula zikawavuta amakhala kuti ali ndi mphamvu zothetsera vuto lawo.”

“Zoonadi,” anatero Obika. “Chabwino ndikhoza kuvala chinyawucho, komatu ndangovomerera manyazi.”

“Ndikanena kuti ayi,” Obika anatero mumtima mwake, “anena kuti Ezeulu ndi banja lake atsimikiza mtima kuwononga sadaka ya Amalu yemwe sanawalawwire chilichonse.” Obika sanauze mkazi wake kuti achoke usiku umenewo kufikira pamene anadya mgonero. Nthawi zonse Obika anakonda kukadyera chakudya chake kukhumbi la mkazi wake. Mkazi wakeyo anakonda

kumujeda chifukwa cha zimenezi ndipo ankamunena kuti anasokonekera mutu ndi chikondi. Okuata anali akukombezera m'mbale yake ya nsuzi pamene Obika ankayamba kuyankhula. Iye anali atapinda chala chake chamkommbaphala, ndipo anachiyendetsa m'mbale ya nsuziyo, kenako anachilowetsa mkamwa.

“Muchoka bwanji usiku uno musakumva bwino m'thupi?” iye anafunsa. “Musavutike ndi zimenezi ingokhalani pansi. Mwambotu uli mawa, kodi sangadikire kufikira mawalo?”

“Usandaule sindikachedwako. Aneto ndi ine ndife a nsengwa imodzi ndipo ndingokufuna ndikaone mmene akukonzekerera sadaka ya bambo ake.”

Okuata anangokhala chete osanena kanthu.

“Utseke chitsekochi bwinobwino. Palibe amene angabwere n'kudzakuba. Ndikulonjeza kuti sindikakhali-tsako.”

Ng'oma ya *ekwe-ogbazulobodo* inalira kuti *kome kome kokome kome kokome* ndipo inapitirizabe kulira pochenjeza aliyense amene anali adakali m'maso kuti apite kukagona n'kuzimitsa nyali. Ogbazulobodo anali mdani mwa anthu amoyo. Ng'omayo inalira kwa nthawi yaitali, moti anthu ambiri anaimva. Pamene inkasiya kulira, kunja kunali bata lochititsa mantha lomwe linachititsa kuti kulira kwa tizilombo tausiku kumveke ponseponse. Obika ndi anthu ena omwe ankatha kunyamula *ayaka* kapena kuti mzimu wa nyimbo, anakhala kumunsi kwa *okwolo* pamasitepe ndipo ankacheza komanso kuseka. Nayenso munthu amene ankaimba ng'oma ya *ekwe* uja anabwera kudzakhala pagululi atamaliza kuimba kuja ndipo anasiya ng'oma ija ikuoneka theka chifukwa cha kuwala kwa koloboyi yemwe anali pafupi.

Pamene *ekwe* uja ankaimbidwanso kachiwiri ngati

chenjezo lomaliza kwa amene anali asanazimitse nyali m'nyumba zawo, Obika anali akuchezabe ndi anthu ena aja ndipo zinkangooneka kuti sakutekeseka ndi kalikonse. Munthu wina wachikulire, dzina lake Ozumba, yemwe ankasunga chinyawu cha mizimu ya usiku, anapita kuka-ima pafupi ndi woimba ng'oma uja. Kenako anaima n'kuyamba kukuwa ndi mawu ake amazenene ndipo anaimba *ugoli* maulendo anayi kapena asanu mokhala ngati akuchotsa kangawude. Kenako anafunsa ngati Obika anali pomwepo. Obika anayang'ana komwe kunali wachikuli-reyo ndipo anamuona ataima poteropo mwakachizirezire. Mwapang'onopang'ono Obika anaimirira ndipo anapita kumene kunali Ozumba n'kukaima pafupi naye. Ozumba anawerama n'kutenga chinkhwende chopangidwa ndi zingwe chomwenso chinali ndi ziyaliyali zodzaza ndi *ekpili* yemwe akamayenda ankaweyeseka ngati maseche. Obika anaimika manja ake kuti Ozumba amange bwinobwino chinkhwendecho m'chiwuno mwake popanda chosokoneza. Atamaliza kuchita zimenezi, Ozumba anayendetsa manja ake ngati munthu wosapenya kuti apeze ndodo yachitsulo yomwe inazikidwa pansi. Ataipeza anaizula n'kumuika Obika m'dzanja lake lamanja. Woimba ng'oma ya *ekwe* uja anapitirizabe kuimba chikoloboyi chija chikumuunikira mwachimbuzimbuzi. Obika anagwira ndondo yachitsulo ija mwamphamvu ndipo kenako anayamba kukukuta mano ake. Ozumba anadikira pang'ono kuti Obika akonzeke bwinobwino. Ndiyendo mwapang'ono-pang'ono anachotsa mkanda wapakhosi wotchedwa *ike-agwu-ani*. Woimba *ekwe* uja anayamba kuwonjeza moto. Kenako Obika anatukula khosi lake ndipo Ozumba anaika mkanda wa *ike-agwu-ani* m'khosi mwake. Pamene ankachita zimenezi ankanena kuti:

*“Tun-tun gem-gem
 Oso mgbada bu nugwu
 Liwiro la gwape
 limaonekera paphiri.”*

Atangomaliza kuyankhula mawu amenewa, Ogba-zulobodo anadzambatuka n’kuyamba kulira kuti: *Ewo okuo! Ewo okuo!* Woimba ng’oma uja anaponyera pansi ndodo zake zoimbaira ndipo nthawi yomweyo anazimitsa chikoloboyi chija. Mzimu uja unasomeka pansi ndodo yachitsulo ija ndipo ndodoyo inkangotekeseka mumdimu. Kenako chilombocho chinaizulanso ndipo chinazimirika mumdimu molowera ku *Nkwo* ndipo m’mbuyo mwake chinasiya anthu akuimba kuti:

Ntchentche yomwe imangozungulirazungulira pamulu wamatudzi imangotaya nthawi yake chifukwa nthawi zonse muluwo umakhala waukulu kuposa ntchentcheyo. Chinthu chimene chimaimba ng’oma ya ngwesi chimakhala pansi pa nthaka. Mdimu ndi waukulu kwambiri moti umatha kupereka nyanga kwa galu. Munthu amene anabadwa kale ndi amene amakhala ndi mapale ambiri a mipika yosweka. Ndi afo yemwe amabweretsa mvula kuti inyowetse nthaka. Munthu amene amayenda patsogolo pa anzake ndi amene amakumana ndi mizimu. Mleme unawulula kuti umadziwa zoti ndi wonyansa n’chifukwa chake umayenda usiku. Munthu amene wakwera pamwamba pa mtengo wagwalangwa akatsitsa mpweya, ntchentche imasokonezeka. Munthu watsoka ndi amene amamwa madzi n’kutsakamira m’mano mwake . . .

Pamene ankathamanga mumdimawo, nthawi zina sankona bwinobwino, komabe ankadziwa njira zonse. Iye sanaone zizindikiro za pamene anali monga mitengo kapena makhumbi, komabe mapazi ake ankadziwa bwi-

nobwino njira iliyonse ndipo ankadziwa kumene akupita. Palibe kankwaso ndi kamodzi komwe kamene sanakaponde. Iye ankadziwa bwinobwino kumene kunali tinjira tonse, ngakhale kunali chimdima chokhuthala. Ankaima akamva fungo la kuwala basi.

. . . *Ngakhale anthu atamanena zoti khoswe waphedwa chifukwa choluma zinthu za eni, buluzi akhozabe kutenga ndalama zake n'kukalipira kuti akhale ndi mano. Nsungununu zimatafuna igbegulu chifukwa choti ali pansi; isiyeni ikwere mumtengo wagwalangwa ikachitenso zomwezo. Munthu amene wameza mtedza wathunthu wa udala ayenera kuganizira ntchito imene angakakhale nayo akakalowa kuchimbudzi. Ntchentche imene ilibe woilangiza imatsatira mtembo kumanda . . .*

Moto unayamba kuyaka m'chifukwa mwa Obika ndipo kuwawako kunayamba kukolera mpaka kumutu. Iye anayesa kudzilimbitsa, koma kenako anaona kuti sizili bwino. Iye ankangomva ngati waduka pakati.

. . . *Wokupatsa moni akapitirira pachigondono zimakhala zadutsa pa moni. Munthu akagona kwa milungu iwiri ndiye kuti wamwalira. N'chifukwa chiyani munthu amene amakonda nyama ya nkhoa yophedwa pamaliro amachira akadwala? Enansotu amafuna kudya nyama ya nkhoa pamaliro ake. Mtengo waukulu ukagwa, mbalame zimathawira kutali . . . Mbalame imatha kuwuluka kucho-ka panthaka n'kukatera pachulu koma sidziwa kuti idakali panthaka pomwepo . . . Njoka yaing'ono yomwe munthu waiona yekha imasanduka nsato m'maso mwake . . . Chinthu chimene chimapha khoswe wamkazi ndi chimenenso chimapha ana ake . . . Mnyamata amene amafunitsitsa kudziwa mmene bambo ake anafera asanakonzeke kubwezera, amakhala akufuna kukumana ndi zomwe bambo akewo anakumana nazo . . . Munthu amene*

amaseka maso a nyani ayenera kuonetsedwa maso a muntu yemwe anamulera kuti aone mmene anasinthira chifukwa chopemerera pamoto wa utsi . . . Imfa ikafuna kupha galu imayamba ndi kupha mphuno zake . . .

Anthu ena asanu ndi atatu omwe akanatha kunyamula *ayaka* anali akuchezabe pamene Obika anawasiya paja. Ozumba anabwera n’kudzakhala pagululi n’kumadikira kuti Obika abwere. Iwo ankakambirana za ng’ombe yaikulu yomwe ana a Amalu ankafuna kupha pasadaka pomwe anamva Ogbazulobodo akubwera. Amuna a *ayaka* aja anadzuka mwachanguchangu ndipo anakonzeka kuti ayambe kuimba Ogbazulobodo akangotulukira pa *ilo*.

Iwo anadabwa kwambiri kuti wabwerera mwachangu. Kodi sanadutse njira zonse?

“Ayi, Obika sangachite zimenezo,” anatero Ozumba mosakayikira.

“Mnyamata ameneyu si pano. Ndingakonde kukhala ndi mnyamata wochangamuka ngati ameneyu ngakhala atakhala kuti amaswa zinthu chifukwa cha phuma.”

Asanamalize kuyankhula mawu amenewa anaona Ogbazulobodo akubwera chothamanga n’kudzagwera pansi pafupi ndi *okwolo*.

Ozumba anachotsa mkanda wam’khosi uja ndipo anaitana Obika koma sanamuyankhe. Anaitananso n’kumugwira pachifuwa, koma kunali zii. Iwo anamutsira madzi ozizira kuti atsitsimuke. Nyimbo yomwe anyamata a *ayaka* aja ankaimba inadukira panjira. Iwo anangoima mozungulira pamene Obika anagwera maso ali tong’o-o.

Tambala woyamba analira. Ezeulu anali adakali mu *obi* wake. Moto wa zipika uja unali utazima kalekale. Kodi

anali mapazi omwe ankawamva chapansipasiwo? Iye anamvetsera mwatcheru. Inde, unalidi mtswatswa wa mapazi a anthu. Komanso ena anakambirana chapansipasi. Nthawi yomweyo Ezeulu anagwira chikwanje chake. Kodi anthu amenewo anali ndani? Nanga n'chifukwa chiyani ankabwera kunyumba kwake usiku ngati ume-newu?

“Ndi ndani?” Ezeulu anakuwa motero. Anthu aja anaima kaye komanso anadula zokambirana zawo zija. Kwa kanthawi, Ezeulu sanayankhule chilichonse ndipo anthu anali panja ajanso nawo anangoti duu.

“Anthu,” anatero mawu a munthu wina wochokera panja paja.

“Kodi ndi ndani amene amatchedwa anthuyo? Mfuti yanga ndi yotcheratchera ndipo munthu wotchedwa anthuyo asamale.”

“Ezeulu, ndi ine Ozumba.”

“Ozumba?”

“Eya.”

“Wabwera kudzatani usiku uno?”

“Ndabwera kudzakubenthulirani malodza amene atigwera m'mudzi muno. Mbuzi yadya nsipu kuchokera pamutu panga.”

Ezeulu atangomva zimenezi anayamba kusunkezera moto uja. “Dikirani ndikoleze moto kuti ndione bwinobwino nkhope zanu.” Mtengo wina unali wautali kwambiri moti anauthyola ndi bondo lake. Kenako anapemerera pamotopo kangapo ndipo unayaka.

“Lowani kuti mudzandifotokozere bwinobwino chimene mwabwerera.”

Atangoona thupi la Obika panja paja, Ezeulu adzambatuka n'kutenga chikwanje chake. “Chachitika n'chiyani? Ndi ndani wachita zimenezi? Ndikuti ndi ndani

wachita zimenezi?” Ozumba anayamba kufotokoza koma thupi la Ezeulu linangoti gwa. Chikwanje chija chinagwera pansi ndipo kenako anayamba kumenya ntchafu zake ndi manja.

“Mwana wanga-a,” iye anayamba kulira. “Ulu, kodi munalipo pamene zimenezi zimachitika?” Kenako anapita n’kukatsamira pachifuwa pa thupi la Obika.

Pamene nthanda inkatuluka, anthu anali atakonzaka kale zoti alengeze za imfa ya Obika. Ng’oma zolengeza uthenga wamaliro zinali zitaimikidwa pakhoma. Komanso botolo la zipolopolo zolizira mizinga linali litaikidwa chapambali. Ezeulu ankangoti zungulizunguli pakati pa anthu omwe anabwera kudzamutonhoza. Iye anali atasokonezeka kwambiri moti pa nthawi ina anatola tsache n’kuyamba kusesa pakhomopo. Koma munthu wina anamulandira ndipo anamugwira dzanja n’kukalowa naye mu *obi* wake.

“Anthu ayamba kutulukira posachedwapa,” iye anatero chapansipansi, “koma pakhomopa ndi posasesa.”

“Musadandaule ndi zimenezo. Ndipeza munthu kuti asese pompanopompano.”

Imfa ya Obika inagwedeza Umuaro ndi mitsitsi yomwe. Munthu wangati iyeyo sanali woti angapezeke mwachisawawa padzikoli. Ndipo kwa Ezeulu zinkangokhala ngati nayenso wamwalira.

Anthu ena ankaganiza kuti Ezidemili asangalala ndi nkhanayi. Koma anthu amenewa sankamudziwa bwino-bwino Ezidemili. Iye sanali munthu wotero. Kuwonjezera

apo, ankadziwa kuopsa kosangalala ndi tsoka la mnzako. Chomwe anthu ena anamumva akunena ndi choti: “Ate-ngerepo phunziro pa zimene zachitikazi kuti adzachite zinthu mosamala ulendo wina.”

Koma kwa Ezeulu panalibenso ulendo wina. Tangoganizirani za munthu wosiyana ndi anthu ena onse, yemwe nthawi zonse ankapita kunkhondo popanda zida zodzitetezera akudziwa kuti zipolopolo sizingalowe pathupi lake; akudziwa kuti chikwanje chizingonjanja pakhungu lake lowindika ndi mankhwala. Taganizirani za munthu ameneyu ali pakati pa nkondo yowirira zedi, ndiye kenako mphamvu zake zija n’kungomuchokera. Kodi munthu ameneyu angauzidwenso kuti adzakhale wosamala ulendo wina? Kodi angauze mfuti, mivi kapena zikwanje kuti: *Taimani kaye! Ndikufuna ndipite kaye kunyumba ndikatakase mankhwala anga komanso kuti ndikaone chomwe chasokonekera; n’kutheka kuti munthu wina kunyumba kwathu, mwina mwana, wawononga mankhwala anga?* Ayi. Poteroipo sipakhalanso ulendo wina.

Ezeulu anakhala pansi asakukhulupirira. Nkhani sinali imfa ya Obika yokha, ngakhale kuti inali yowawa kwambiri. Chowawa kwambiri chinali mmene anthu ankamutokosera ndi mnyozo. Mnyozo wotero ukanatha kugwetsa ngakhale chiphona chouma mtima. Paja anthu amati mwamuna salira pagulu, choncho misozi ya Ezeulu inkangotsikira m’mimba ndipo chisoni chake chinkangoonekera pamphumi.

Pa nthawi ina Ezeulu ankamva chisoni chachikulu kuposa thupi lake. Iye akanatha kupirira ululu umenewu zikanakhala kuti anthu ena sakumunyozano. N’chifukwa chiyani Ulu analanga wansembe wake chotere? N’chifukwa chiyani anamudula khosi mopanda chisoni, kenako n’kumukwirira pansi? Kodi analakwa chiyani munthu

wabambo? Kodi zimene ankachitazo sizinali zimene mulungu yemweyo anamuuza kuti achite? Kodi zinayamba zamvekapo liti kuti mwana wapsa ndi phala lomwe mayi ake amuika mkamwa? Kodi munthu angatumize mwana wake kuti akapale moto, kenako n'kutsegula mvula kuti imunyowetse? Kodi ndi ndani amene anauzapo mwana wake kuti akwere mumtengo wa gwalagwa kenako n'kutinga nkhwangwa n'kuyamba kuwudula? Koma lero zangati zimenezo zinali zitachitika pamaso pa anthu onse. Kodi zimenezi si chizindikiro cha chipasuko cha zinthu zonse? Zinkangokhala ngati mulunguyo, waona kuti mphamvu zamuthera kenako n'kuliya liwiro lantondowadowoka, n'kusiya anthu ake akulira ching'ang'adza ndi mavuto.

Ngati kalulu sangathe kuthamanga mofulumira, ayenera kupereka mpata kuti fulu adutse.

N'kutheka kuti kunali kuganizira kwambiri zinthu zimenezi kumene kunachititsa kuti Ezeulu abalalikiretu. Kapena adani ake omwe anaima pafupi naye anali atayamba kumuona ngati nyerere n'kumudiriza ndi zidendene zawo. Koma maganizo achiwiriwa anali abwinoko kwa iye. Anamuthandiza kwambiri chifukwa m'masiku omaliza a moyo wake, Ezeulu anazungulira mutu ndipo zimenezi zinachititsa kuti asavutike kwambiri ndi ululu wa mavuto omwe anakumana nawo. Anamuthandizanso kuti asadwale ndi nkhwawa chifukwa cha zimene zinachitika pambuyo pake.

Pa nthawiyi, Winterbottom anali atabwerako ku England komwe anapita kukapitidwa mphepo ina kuti thupi lake libwereremo. Posakhalitsa anakwatira dokotala

uja, Mayi Savage. Kungochokera nthawi imeneyi, Winterbottom sanamvenso za Ezeulu. Munthu yekhayo amene akanamufotokozera za Ezeulu anali John Nwodika, wantchito wake. Koma John nayenso anali atasiya ntchito n’kuyamba malonda ogulitsa fodya. Zinkangokhala ngati milungu yamubwezeretsa Winterbottom pamene inamupeza, itamuseweretsa kwa kanthawi ngati chidole. Kena-ko, anthu a ku Umuaro anayamba kuona zipatso za mavuto omwe anabzala. Nkhani yake inali yovutirapo. Mulungu wawo anali atawathawa n’kuwasiya padzuwa. Mulunguyu anachititsa manyazi wansembe wake ndipo zimenezi zinatsimikizira mfundo yakuti ngakhale munthu atakhala wamphamvu bwanji, sangapambane polimbana ndi mako-
lo ake, komanso kuti palibe munthu amene anayamba wapambanapo mlandu wolimbana ndi fuko lake.

Ngatidi zinali choncho, ndiye kuti Ulu anachita zimenezi pa nthawi yolakwika chifukwa pamene ankawononga wansembe wakeyu, anangodzibweretsera tsoka losaneneka. Ulu ankangokhala ngati buluzi yemwe anasokoneza mwambo wamaliro a mayi ake ndi manja ake omwe. Kwa mulungu yemwe anasankha kuwononga wansembe wake kapena kumupereka m’manja mwa adani, zinali ngati akuuza anthu kuti amusiye ndipo izi ndi zimene anthu a mu Umuaro anachita. Patatha masiku angapo kuchokera pamene Obika anamwalira, Akhristu anachita chikondwerero chotsegulira ntchito yokolola zilazi, ndipo anthu ambiri a mu Umuaro anachita nawo chikondwererochi. Izi zinali zosiyana kwambiri ndi zime-
ne Goodcountry ankayembekezera. Chomwe chinawadabwitsa kwambiri n’choti anthu ambiri anatumiza ana awo ndi chilazi chimodzi kapena ziwiri kuti akapereke nsembe kuchipembedzo chatsopanocho n’cholinga choti Mulungu wa Akhristu awateteze kwa Ulu. Kungochokera pame-

nepo, chilazi chilichonse chomwe chinakololedwa m'mi-
nda ya mu Umuaro chinkakololedwa m'dzina la mwana.

Mukhoza kupeza mabuku ena kwaulere pa linki iyi: [Lula Pensulo](#)